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JUNE 2021

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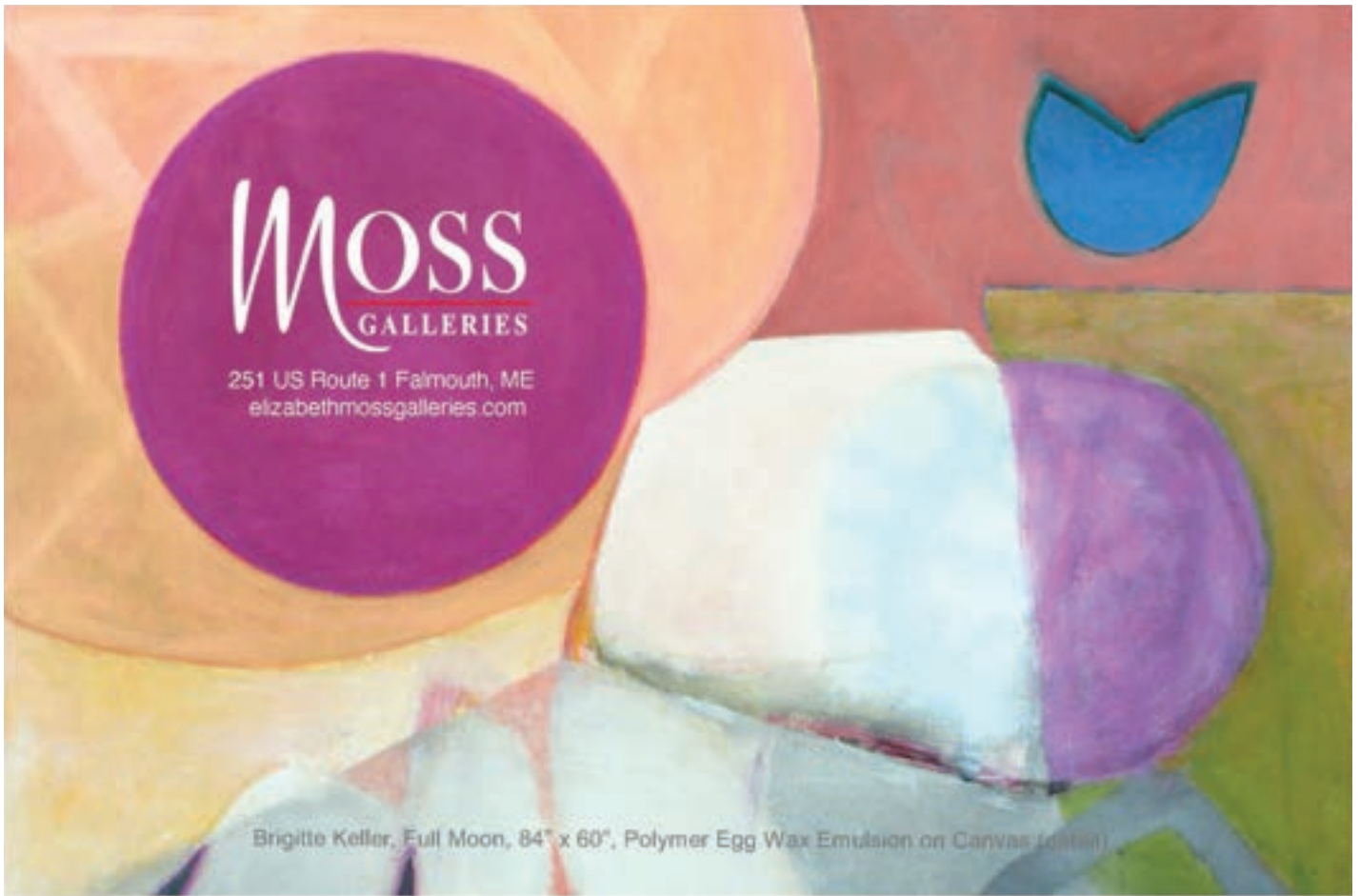
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Brigitte Keller, Full Moon, 84" x 60", Polymer Egg Wax Emulsion on Canvas (detail)

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Photo by Janet McMahon

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SOPHIE DAVIS AND THE QUARTET HALCYON

Combining beautiful music and environmental stewardship.

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DR. YASMIN MAHAL

One woman's experience in the pandemic.



I take a deep breath . . . I feel warm air hit my lungs . . . yes, it is June. The world is coming alive, the shade from trees is blooming.

There is always new growth—it is a message to remember. We can start over, give ourselves a chance to rejuvenate, become who we wish to be. Like a beautiful spring morning.

I embrace the joy of women, the stamina to always bounce back. I so believe in each and every one of you. Now it is time for you to believe in you.

It is time to honor your new growth, during these challenging times.

I have always felt the biggest foe to having a balanced life is keeping our noses to the grindstone. If we keep our noses so close to the grindstone, we may miss the glorious wonders around us. I encourage you all to take a deep breath, take in the gifts of this earth, hear the birds singing to us all.

Please let's honor June with our love for this glorious earth, and all who walk it.

So many of you take the time to call and write. I am so very grateful for your continued support of *Maine Women Magazine*. Remember, it is you who makes this all happen. I welcome all ideas.

I will share one of my favorite quotes from poet Lord Byron:

“There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore.
There is society, where none intrudes,
But the deep Sea, and music in its roar.”

Mary Frances Barstow
Publisher

Maine Women Magazine neither endorses or critiques the women featured in our magazine based on their belief system or political viewpoints. We wish that political and personal differences be respected and used to start conversations based on curiosity and learning. We believe in freedom of speech.

MAINE WOMEN MAGAZINE

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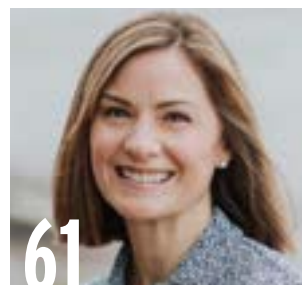
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By L.C. Van Savage

Cover photo by Jason Paige Smith

| LETTERS TO THE EDITOR |

I have looked up Ms. Randall and watched her videos on her artistic creations (“Emiley Randall: Makeup Artist,” *Maine Women Magazine*, April 2021.) She truly is amazing.

—Sara, Caribou

Great article about a great daughter and person (“A ‘Love Horde’ for Anna Maria Tocci,” *Maine Women Magazine*, May 2021).

—Greg Tocci

Lynn Fantom did an excellent job describing Partners for World Health and the impact the organization has in our community and beyond (“Elizabeth McLellan: Don’t Throw It Out,” *Maine Women Magazine*, May 2021). I am proud to say that I am a volunteer at this amazing organization.

—Sheila P.

Your article brings to light the life of Anna Maria Tocci (“A ‘Love Horde’ for Anna Maria Tocci,” *Maine Women Magazine*, May 2021). Each time someone reads it and says her name, her life is remembered. This Maine woman will not be forgotten.

—Ellen F., New Gloucester

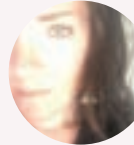
CORRECTION: The name of Elizabeth McLellan was incorrectly spelled on the cover of the May 2021 issue of *Maine Women*. We regret the error.

| CONTRIBUTORS |

Robert Cook is an award-winning journalist who has covered everything from Presidential campaigns to compelling human interest stories for more than 25 years.



Sarah Holman is a writer living in Portland. She grew up in rural Maine and holds a BFA from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Sarah is enthusiastic about coffee, thrift shop treasures, and old houses in need of saving. Find her online at storiesandsidebars.com.



Shelagh Gordon Talbot hails from Vermont. She worked in the film and television industry, including on the award-winning kid’s show *Jabberwocky*. Looking for a less hectic life, she moved to the Moosehead Lake region and became a journalist. She is a freelancer who also writes music, plays guitar, and sings.



Robert Diamante is a writer and photographer whose career in the jewelry industry has taken him from Bangor to Bali to Boulder. He lives in Maine full time. (robertdiamante.com)



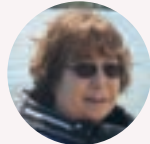
Lew-Ellyn Hughes is an award-winning columnist and author. Her column *Away with Words*, is an eight-time winner in the Maine Press Association’s Better Newspaper Contest. She writes nonfiction stories about the people, places, and lifestyle of rural Maine.



Phil Tedrick first came to Maine in 1972 as a jockey, riding Thoroughbreds at Scarborough Downs. He returned to Maine in 1996 as an emergency physician, and practiced until 2012. For many years he occupied the “Last Chair, second violin” position with the Augusta Symphony Orchestra. He resides in Readfield.



Pam Ferris-Olson, PhD, worked as a freelance writer/photographer/editor/educator prior to relocating to Maine in 2016. The breadth of her experience with natural resources, storytelling and women, and a passion for the ocean inspired her to found *Women Mind the Water*. She is a visual artist who enjoys kayaking.



Althea Kastelic is from Portland and is currently interning with *Maine Women Magazine*. She is studying Journalism, Psychology, and Environmental Studies at Mount Holyoke College and is enjoying exploring Maine’s beaches and trying out new recipes!



Lynette L. Walther is the GardenComm Gold Medal winner for writing, a five-time recipient of the GardenComm Silver Metal of Achievement, and recipient of the National Garden Bureau’s Exemplary Journalism Award. Her gardens are in Camden.



Sheila D. Grant is a freelance editor/writer/photographer, and the author of two books. Her work has appeared in the *Boston Globe*, and been recognized by the Maine Press Association and the New England Outdoor Writers Association.



Susan Olcott is a freelance writer living in Brunswick with her husband and nine-year-old twin girls. She loves to write about all things coastal and edible, and any story full of life. Every person has a story to tell, and she thrives on writing and sharing them.



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POSTCARD FROM HOLLY

BY HOLLY MARTIN

Holly Martin, 29, is sailing around the world in her 27-foot-long Grinde sailboat, which she christened the SV Gecko. She left Maine in the fall of 2019, from Round Pond Harbor on the Pemaquid Peninsula. Holly sent this "postcard" by satellite from the South Pacific, to the readers of Maine Women Magazine.

The love shared in the sailing community stretches beyond language and culture. Our little floating world leaves large spaces for friendship. Perhaps we have so much to give because our lives feel as slow and meaningful as the tide. There's always the odd boat project that needs attention, but even these jobs are near and dear to our hearts. We have all chosen this adventure, and our sense of camaraderie solidifies in our common quest to squeeze the juiciest parts of our lives. When you give freely, you can receive freely as well.

One sunset evening, I was sailing my dinghy around the anchorage and

enjoying the cool relief that comes at the end of the day. I heard an engine behind me and saw a red dinghy full of wet-suit clad sailors waving a fish they had just speared. They were my friends from another boat.

"For your dinner!" they called. They

had been out fishing all day and were happy to be able to share their bounty. I held out my bailer, and they slid over the fish, then zoomed away. This is the world I inhabit now. When we have extra, we share. That way everyone around us feels rich. •





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SOPHIE DAVIS

and the musical ensemble Halcyon

Combining beautiful music and environmental stewardship

BY PAM FERRIS-OLSON

Sailing, swimming, and digging in the mud flats are typical summertime childhood memories made in Maine. For violinist Sophie Davis, now 26, her favorite memories include all those—plus digging through sheet music and playing duets in the kitchen with her older sister Josie. “Maine is a musical place year-round but especially in summertime,” the Waldoboro native says.

After graduating from Watershed School in Camden, Sophie attended Oberlin College and Conservatory in Ohio, where she earned degrees in Violin Performance and in Environmental Studies, with a focus on oceans and climate science. That’s an unusual combination of interests and abilities, but to Sophie, they fit together in satisfying ways.

Sophie, her sister Josie Davis, Colin Wheatley, violist, and Ju Young Lee, cellist, formed the string ensemble Halcyon in 2018, though they had been playing together in various configurations for many years before then. Halcyon has been involved in a number of Maine-centered collaborations focused on climate change awareness. One of these collaborations involved the Halcyon ensemble commissioning

the scientist and artist Jill Pelto to paint “Rising Mitigation,” a watercolor depicting sea level rise in Maine. The concert based around it will be called “Rise Up.” The collaboration was inspired by Samuel Barber’s musical piece “Adagio for Strings.”

“Landmarks” is another program that Halcyon hopes to present in the summer/fall of 2021. It will pair aerial footage of Maine’s coast and mountains with selected musical pieces. These collaborations are important to Sophie and the other ensemble members because they “believe that climate change is one of the most pressing challenges and greatest opportunities our generation faces and that it is our responsibility to respond to it imaginatively. Our goal as a quartet is to use music, art,

and story to inspire our communities to engage with the natural world in ways that celebrate stewardship and respect.”

“The four of us inspire each other musically in ways that feel meaningful and unique. Halcyon has become an outlet for creative and diverse communication between us as musicians and our audiences,” Sophie says. That meaningful communication also connects Sophie to the environment and her love of the ocean. “I strive to incorporate my scientific background into my work with Halcyon, with the goal of using music and art to create a new context for scientific data and the realities of a changing environment.”

As she alludes to above, Sophie has a significant scientific side to her talents, as well as a musical side, and she is always looking for ways to make connections between the two. For example, in addition to playing and performing with Halcyon, Sophie has had opportunities to pursue her scientific interests through the Sea Education Association (SEA) Semester Program. This non-profit educational organization operates two tall ships that conduct scientific research on both the Atlantic and Pacific.

During the winter of 2020, Sophie’s tall ship experience included listening to real-time underwater soundscapes and whale song in the Lesser Antilles. She made recordings and took photographs with a plan to incorporate them into a Halcyon performance. This performance will take place post-COVID-19 when public concerts are once again possible.

In the course of her musical career, Sophie has performed at the Kennedy Center, in the Monte Music Festival in India, and with the Jordan National Orchestra in Amman, Jordan. Sometimes her musical and environmental work have dovetailed, as they do with Halcyon. For instance, she received a Fulbright Research Grant and spent nine months on the



From left, Sophie and Josie Davis performing with Halcyon. Photo by Larry Pritchett



Photo by Jason Paige Smith



Top: Halcyon performing its “Envisioning Change” program for a student audience with art by Jill Pelto. “Envisioning Change” was a multimedia performance project exploring the impacts of climate change on Maine and the Arctic through music, art, data, and story. Photo by Larry Pritchett
Bottom left: Sophie Davis, March 2020, aboard the SSV Corwith Cramer during a voyage to research whale song and ocean soundscapes.
Bottom right: Sophie Davis listening to real-time underwater soundscapes and whale song off the coast of Guadeloupe. The voyage was made in collaboration with SEA Semester’s C-290 voyage in February and March 2020. Photos courtesy Sophie Davis

Polynesian island of the Independent State of Samoa. While there, she performed with the Samoa National Orchestra and was able to explore ways that the arts are used to raise awareness of climate change.

Climate change is a reality for all Samoans, Sophie says. “Artists of all types respond to the challenges they face daily, and the impacts of climate change are experienced regularly. Many of the artists I spoke with used their medium as a way to highlight the realities of lost landscapes and traditions, more frequent

cyclones, and less predictability in natural cycles and phenology. Some did this visually (through tattoo, photography, paintings, or wood carvings), and others through music, song, and story.”

Sophie’s dedication to performing music intertwines with her love of being on the water. “There’s something captivating and alluring about the open ocean and the feelings that come with traveling by water.” In addition to being a crew member on tall ships, she has worked with the Pemaquid Oyster Company, where she does everything from drive boats, harvest

and plant oysters, and pack them for sale.

To this day, music helps define her way of being in the world, Sophie says, emphasizing that it is the collaboration that she enjoys. Her earliest experiences of collaboration were playing the violin with her sister. That expanded to playing with others in high school and college, inviting friends to play concerts with her during summertime in Maine, and later forming Halcyon.

Looking back, Sophie doesn't remember any expectation that she or her sister would play an instrument, although the family had a piano, and her mom would pick up a fiddle or guitar on rainy days. Her parents might never have formally studied music, but they enjoyed listening to music. Sophie remembers that her elder sister Josie pestered her parents for music lessons. Josie was six when she began studying. After six months of tagging along to Josie's lesson, Sophie, who was four at the time, began violin lessons of her own.

While she admits that occasionally, "there are days when I don't feel like playing and days when I'd much rather do something else," Sophie says she has never really considered practicing a chore. In high school she practiced several hours a day, and in college her practice time was significantly more.

Mostly, she's chosen to practice early in the morning and be able to "set aside time that feels like my own." Sophie loves having time where she doesn't get distracted by the day's other activities.

As to combining music and environmental science—Sophie wants to keep digging deeper into both, with each interest reinforcing the other in ever-new ways.

This summer and fall, Halcyon has upcoming concerts scheduled in Rockland, Boothbay, North Haven, Rockport, Waldoboro, Searsmont, and Mount Desert Island. To learn more about Halcyon and for up-to-date specifics on their upcoming performances, please visit their website, at www.halcyonstringquartet.com. For more on Sophie Davis's artistic process, please listen to the Women Mind the Water Podcast featuring Sophie, available free at womenmindthewater.com.

For more on scientist/artist Jill Pelto, mentioned above, see Maine Women Magazine, November 2020. •

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GENEVIEVE STOKES is *Listening to the Universe*

The rising star from Falmouth releases Swimming Lessons.

BY ALTHEA KASTELIC

In a video posted to YouTube, a ten-year-old Genevieve Stokes can be seen seated at a piano wearing a knit sweater, her face a mixture of excitement and concentration. Her eyes flick from the piano keys to the audience and back again, and she begins to play the first few notes, her expression becoming soulful and open. Her voice fills the room—a rich, melodic, belt-y timbre that conveys a level of depth and feeling that far exceeds her young age.

As a child, Genevieve was inspired by artists like Adele and Regina Spektor and developed her voice through mimicking them. “I would record myself doing Adele karaoke, over and over and over again, listen back, and if it wasn’t perfect, I would do it again,” she recalls. “I didn’t have a vocal coach growing up, so that was my way of learning my vocal style.”

Almost ten years after the video of her performance was posted, Genevieve Stokes’ voice remains low and melodic, but her powerful style has morphed into a sound that is uniquely her own.

With a shock of crimson dyed hair and a fresh, introspective style, she has grabbed the attention of hundreds of thousands of viewers and listeners across the country. In the fall of 2020, at just 19 years old, she signed to Atlantic Records, joining the ranks of critically acclaimed musicians Cardi B, Janelle Monáe, and Coldplay. Her first EP, *Swimming Lessons*, was released in March of this year.

“It’s been almost two years of preparation and to finally release it . . . I’m so excited,” says Genevieve. “It was a difficult time in my life, and I felt so out of place in a lot of ways. I wasn’t in touch with myself. . . My life is so different now, so I feel like *Swimming Lessons* is capping off that time period. It feels nice to finally have it out in the world.”

The second youngest of four, the singer currently lives with her parents and little sister. Born in Maryland, she moved with her family to Peaks Island at age three, living there for a year before moving to Falmouth. No one else in her family is musically inclined, Genevieve says. “When I started, they were kind of shocked, but they have always been extremely supportive. My dad would go to all my open mics with me.” After her parents purchased a piano for their family, when she was eight years old, she says it became her go-to companion for musical exploration and inspiration. “I started writing and playing piano at the same time. I didn’t even know how to really play piano, but I would try to make chords and then the lyrics came with it.”

Along with open-mic nights, Genevieve pursued music through workshops and classes with Maine Academy of Modern Music (MAMM), where she performed regularly with her then band

Haven. She participated in the MAMM Slam, a “battle of the bands”-style competition, as well as multiple live shows through the organization. After graduating high school in 2019, she decided to take a year off and live at home, working with her manager Brian Kierulf to further develop her music career.

“It’s been a strange process,” she says, “but it’s been so rewarding. We did it all independently and got on some major playlists curated by music streaming services, and then the labels started reaching out. I thought Atlantic [Records] was the perfect fit.”

When it comes to songwriting, she says that she takes a playful, exploratory route. She comes up with melodies on her piano, stringing together words and phrases that pop into her head until lyrics take shape. “Then, I listen back [to my recordings] and pick out my favorite lyrics, and a story starts to unfold.”

Genevieve began writing the seven tracks featured on her EP in high school, starting with “Simple Love,” a stripped-down piano ballad, which she wrote her sophomore year. She says, “The songs were super therapeutic for me. I felt like I could put my thoughts into something I was proud of. Music has been the one thing that keeps me grounded. When I’m writing, it’s almost like meditation.”

Despite her dedication to music and her burgeoning success, Genevieve has had her doubts, as many young adults do in pursuing their dreams. “When I started writing music, I instantly fell in love with it,” she says. “It felt like I just knew that’s what I was supposed to do. I had a couple of times, throughout high school and middle school, where I thought, ‘I don’t know. . . maybe I should have a backup option.’ But I always knew deep down that I wanted to be a musician.”

Finding the strength to overcome her fears, Genevieve Stokes says, came from both looking within and beyond. “I’ve always listened to the universe and had faith in it. I remember, even when I was little, I’d think, ‘Please give me a sign of this, or give me a sign for that,’ and I would be so grateful for everything that I got. . . It’s so important to keep trusting yourself, to listen to what you want and not just go with your backup option because it’s safe. I still have doubts, but I have to trust the process and know that I can lean on the universe.”

Genevieve Stokes’s EP Swimming Lessons is available to stream or purchase on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Music, Soundcloud, Tidal, iTunes, Pandora, Deezer, and Amazon Music. All of her music videos are viewable on her YouTube channel Genevieve Stokes. For more information and links to social media accounts visit her website, genevievestokes.com.

Dale Andree and National Water Dance Perform on Wet Land

“I have fallen in love with the mud.”

BY PAM FERRIS-OLSON

Dale Andree’s emotional connection with Maine lies in the primordial mudflats of the Weskeag River, an inlet of the Penobscot Bay. Twice daily, the ebb tides lay them bare.

This beautiful environment, running along the coastal edge of her South Thomaston property, has inspired Dale, a dance artist and founder of National Water Dance, to create a new dance piece. She and her daughter, Thryn Saxon, also a professional dancer, recently choreographed, danced, and filmed a dance, entitled *Sodden Ground*, on the water’s edge. As Dale says, “I have fallen in love with the mud.”

Dale’s artistic sensibility has noted changes occurring on and along the mudflats since she took ownership of the South Thomaston property in the early 2000s. She has seen green algae blanket the mudflats, and she has needed to reinforce the bank to withstand erosion. Such signs of environmental change are the basis of the duets that Dale and Thryn perform. The dances reflect on the generational aspect of climate change—the aspect of “being a mother and passing on to my daughter what my generation—and all before me—have done.”

Dale began dance lessons at an early age. Formal training as a dancer didn’t begin until college. Dale hadn’t originally planned on focusing on dance in college, but her feet carried her to the Boston Conservatory of Music, then New York City, Paris, and Florida. In Florida, she met her husband, a fifth generation Floridian.

The couple settled in the Miami area, yet found themselves being drawn northward to Maine. Dale feels that something deep in their souls pulled at them to buy the house along the Weskeag. Dale loves many things about Maine, including the winter, the ruggedness of the land, and Mainers’ approach

to living. She also prefers what she calls the Wyeth colors of Maine to Miami’s bright sun-bleached color palette.

As founder of National Water Dance, Dale virtually inhabits many more places than Maine and Florida. Through all who participate in National Water Dance, Dale is associated with places in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Founded as a national project in 2014, National Water Dance is a biennial event that connects dancers on a specific day and time to simultaneously share a personal dance performance that expresses their feelings about the dangers their local waterways face.

Dale organized her first movement choir for the state of Florida. Through this project, she was building the community for National Water Dance, at the same time that Marylee Hardenbergh was building her community, Global Site Performance, a program that connects dancers from across the globe in outdoor dance performances. Both Hardenbergh and Andree choreograph onsite rather than for the confined space of a theater. They believe that the dances can heighten the awareness of audi-



Photo courtesy Dale Andree

ences to their world and encourage action on environmental issues. They were building these like-minded dance and environmental communities simultaneously, which Dale describes as exciting and positive creative developments.

Dale is currently working on a piece in Florida’s mangroves, on a dance named “Such Rooted Things.” It is part of a commissioned work separate from National Water Dance, and it is premiering soon at the Pérez Art Museum in Miami.

Dale accepts Maine in all seasons. Even in the summer, when the mosquitoes and black flies occasionally annoy, Dale offers residencies for dancers in her home. These residencies are retreats for fellow artists to dance in the studio above the

Sodden Ground, with dancers Dale Andree and Thryn Saxon.



Photo by Miana Jun



Photo by Miana Jun



Mangrove video by Mateo Zapata Serma

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Photo by Miriana Jun

garage, interact with other dancers, and focus solely on dance. In addition to sharing time and space with fellow dancers, they have the chance to preview their evolving works with the local community. It's a wonderful give-and-take experience.

She finds herself spending more time in Maine. It's where she can freely live her dreams: to live in a place of great natural beauty, one that inspires her to create work, and to be able to share the creative work

with her community. With an appealingly wide-eyed expression, Dale confesses, "I really feel at home in the mud."

For more information about Dale Andree, National Water Dance, and to see the video *Sodden Ground*, please visit www.nwdprojects.org. Dale discusses dance and shares a clip from her in progress dance in Florida's mangroves on *Women Mind the Water, Featured Guests*, www.womenmindthewater.com.

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National Water Dance—Maine Dancers



Molly Gawler, 36, Orland, professional dancer. In 2020 Molly performed solo at Sandy Point, in Stockton Springs and plans to participate in 2022. Molly wants to foster awareness of clean water: "Water is universal—we all share water and the need for access to good clean water."

Kay Mann, 62, Brunswick, outreach director for a solar company. In 2020, she performed with Nancy Salmon and Gina Hesse along the Kennebec River in Bath. Kay plans to participate in 2022. Kay, whose roots to a Maine island date back five generations, believes that Maine's indigenous peoples were stewards of the water for many thousands of years "without doing a fraction of the harm that has been done in the past few hundred years."



Nancy Salmon, 73, Freeport, retired, Bates Dance Festival Assistant Director, and adjunct dance/theater faculty. Nancy and Kay have danced together for years. Nancy, who says she grew up visiting the Outer Banks of North Carolina, has a deep appreciation for water and the environment.

National Water Dance—Maine is open to everyone. For additional information, visit www.nwdprojects.org/smparticipation.

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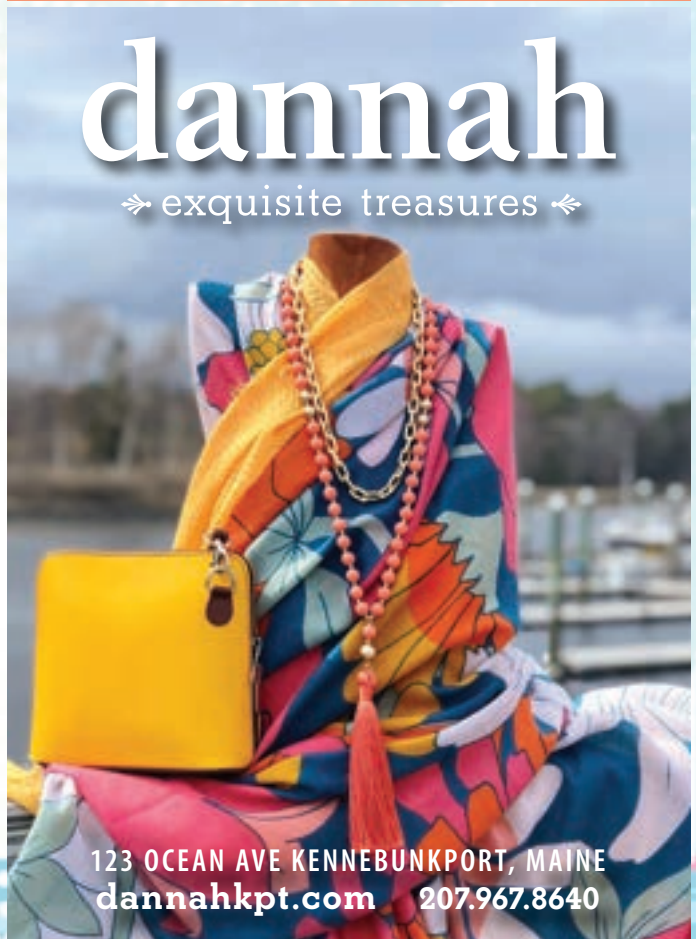
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Dr. Yasmin Mahal

One Woman's Experience in the Pandemic

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

She never expected to face a pandemic. No one did. But Yasmin Mahal is one impressive woman. She took on COVID-19 in a way that could make anyone shiver.

She works at Southern Maine Health Care in Biddeford, in the intensive care unit. During the pandemic, she came face-to-face with the most tragic cases. Even while grappling with the fear and uncertainty of the earliest days of the disease, Dr. Mahal's determination to help others drove her to stand up each day, comforting those who could not be with their families. She regularly experienced death and trials that few of us could imagine.

It's doctors like her who give us all hope.

Meeting Dr. Yasmin Mahal was more than a pleasure, and our conversation put into perspective the scale of the war that she and her fellow doctors have been waging on COVID-19.

Maine has created some of the strongest and bravest women in the world.

I honor this woman, and women like Dr. Mahal, who took on this fight. We, as a community, are proud to have them among us.

MARY:

Can you please describe your work and where you work?

YASMIN:

Yes, I'm in pulmonary and critical care. I work in the intensive care unit at Southern Maine Hospital, Southern Maine Health Care, and then also I do pulmonary medicine on an outpatient basis, also for the hospital. So, I split my time between providing inpatient and outpatient care.

I wanted to clarify, right off, that I am speaking just on behalf of me. I'm not representing my hospital in any way. I did talk to them and let them know that I was going to be speaking with you, and they had no problem with it. I'm just speaking as an individual who happens to work at Southern Maine.

MARY:

Understood. How did you find your way to Maine?

YASMIN:

I grew up in New Jersey, but I've been in Maine since med school at University of New England, here in Biddeford. I did my residency and fellowship at Maine Medical Center in Portland. At Maine Med, I did part of my med school rotations, my internal medicine residency, and my pulmonary and critical care fellowship. And then I joined the staff, the hospital practice, down at Southern Maine Hospital in Biddeford.

MARY:

How long have you been a doctor?

YASMIN:

I graduated med school in 2008. I did my residency right after that. After residency and before the fellowship, my husband Johann and I moved to New Zealand for a sort of gap year. I worked in New Zealand as a doctor down there.

MARY:

What was your experience like in New Zealand?

YASMIN:

It was an amazing and great experience, at a little hospital in very rural farm community, in South Island, New Zealand. I worked with two other doctors, and we ran the 10-bed ward.

Sometimes when I finished a long shift, my husband Johann would pour me into the car, and I slept until we got to wherever the next adventure was that he had planned, so I'd be waking up in the middle of beautiful wilderness. We went on all sorts of backpacking trips, rock climbing. We explored the entire country.

MARY:

Your husband is from Maine, right? How did you two meet?



*Yasmin Mahal, DO
Pulmonary & Critical Care*

Photo by Jason Paige Smith



Southern Maine Health Care in Biddeford.

YASMIN:

Yes, he grew up right in Portland. He went to school in California, lived in DC, and then made his way back to Maine. We met in 2008 and got married in 2014. We met in a yoga class in Maine. He always suggests it when he meets a single guy: go to yoga.

MARY:

What has your experience been, living through the pandemic?

YASMIN:

Oh gosh. It's been an evolving process of challenges. There have been so many layers, right? For me and my colleagues, at first it was this almost tidal wave of fear and anxiety about what was going to happen because no one knew. We all had to run through our different worst-case scenarios of how we were going to be able to provide care for what was then an unclear entity.

Then it hit, and we managed. At our hospital, we were among the hospitals that were seeing the highest rates of COVID. But we did okay in that first wave in Maine.

There was a moving target of data, treatment, experience, and anecdote from all over the place that you're trying to learn from. We learned from collaborating, talking to colleagues, and relying on larger institutions, like Maine Health, to help.

What we were doing back March and April of last year is completely different than what we are doing now, medications-wise. We have more data to go by now. It was a whole other layer to cope with, navigate through, and synthesize.

There was also concern about whether we had adequate PPE, which thankfully, I think, in Maine we did have. There's the constant fear of, "Am I going to get COVID? Am I going to bring it home to my family?" I have two kids. I have a three-year-old boy and a five-year-old girl. You hear all the stories of what we had to do, and they are so true: the rituals of sanitizing and not touching anything, and people taking off their shoes and clothes before they go in their houses. It became a way of life.

Then the challenge becomes the emotional and mental toll that it takes on you, when you're taking care of people who are so ill and unable to see their families. You are the link between them and their families, in this unbelievably terrifying place, taking care of the person and being there for the person. You, the nurses, the respiratory therapist, and others are the support team for those people who are alone in the hospital. You are the ones able to communicate with their families.

MARY:

Being in ICU, you must probably lose some patients. How do you deal with that?

YASMIN:

Medical education, at least when I was going through my training, didn't focus a lot on how a young doctor should learn to cope with loss and death. It didn't give you good tools in this area. We grew up in an environment where a patient passes away, you do your death examination, you express your condolences to the family, you have paperwork to do, and then you move on to the next thing that you've got to do. I think physicians, in general, do not do a very good job of debriefing and responding to their own emotions about loss and death.

Personally, I have in the last month started to think about how we could all use a safe space to talk about this pandemic and the amount of death and stress, and to process it. When you have all that you have going on at work, and then you come home to all that you have going on at home, it doesn't leave a lot of time to stop and think about it.

A couple of patient encounters were traumatic. We watched people get really sick, really quickly, and pass away. The whole experience of that happening was traumatic in certain cases for all the care providers. Then in other cases, people came in really sick and did okay. That's rewarding. As a pulmonary physician, I get to see some of those patients in the office afterward. Some of them are still struggling in terms of their breathing, but they are worlds better than they were and on the right track.

MARY:

Now that you've been through so much of this COVID experience, would you change anything?

YASMIN:

We've done well in Maine, for the most part. There has been a good rate of mask wearing here. I don't think I would necessarily do anything different.

For myself, I was fortunate. There's a group of lady physicians, and we all connected early on in the pandemic. We had almost weekly Zoom calls. It was just a time and place where we could all talk about what we were going through. That was incredibly helpful. Initially, we weren't all the tightest group of people. We knew of each other, we were friends, but now, a year later, we have become so incredibly close. Some of them are ER docs, some are in critical care, some are geriatricians, psychiatrists, radiologists. We're in diverse fields of medicine, but we're going through the experience in different ways, together. It was everything from sending each other funny memes to make us laugh, to articles, to protocols, to crying with each other on the phone about something that would happen.

MARY:

You mentioned your children. How do you manage, balancing your work and your family life?

YASMIN:

I barely manage it. I mean, especially this year, in the beginning, I was sleeping at the hospital, which we don't typically do at my job. It was many nights away from my kids, a lot of FaceTime at bedtime. Now, I'm trying to make the most of the time together that I have. My kids know that there are weeks where they're going to see less of me, and they understand. They know that I'm working a lot, helping to take care of the sick people, and they know about the germs. I have my in-laws nearby, and my husband works from home.

There are two aspects that I think about, where being a woman brings unique challenges to balancing everything: I have a demanding job at work, and I have a demanding job at home, especially with my kids' ages and my personal desire to be really involved in their care, their lives. I think I'm like many, many women in this way.

MARY:

Were most of your patients elderly, or did you see all ages affected?

YASMIN:

Many were older, but more recently—absolutely younger people are getting COVID and going into the ICU as well. The last time I was in the hospital, the majority of my patients were under the age of 45, 50. I think it has to do with vaccination rates; people who have been vaccinated are not getting as sick.

MARY:

How long do you think this COVID-19 pandemic is going to last?

YASMIN:

I think it's going to be with us at some degree, on some level, for a while, if we continue to trend in the way that we're trending with vaccination. If people are only partially vaccinated or elect not to be vaccinated, then I think this disease will remain present in our community for a while, if it will ever entirely go away.

Where there are more vaccinated people, a person feels more comfortable socializing in small, vaccinated groups, and life feels better in that way. But in terms of the hospital and our numbers, we still have COVID in all of our hospitals in Maine, and we still have critically ill COVID patients in all of our hospitals in Maine. When I go to work, I'm reminded acutely that this virus is still getting to people, and it's still killing people.

MARY:

Are you concerned about the mutations of the disease?

YASMIN:

Yes, I am. That [phenomenon of mutations] is a big question mark, in terms of what that means for our future and our communities. I think there's reason right now to feel comfortable with CDC guidelines and the loosening of restrictions that is happening now. But we have to remain vigilant, and we still have to have a degree of caution with our encounters and engagements because things could change with these variants.

MARY:

Do you see patients who have been vaccinated but who still come down with COVID-19?

YASMIN:

It's incredibly, incredibly rare. Yes, it has happened, but I don't know if I have taken care of anyone in that situation, personally.

MARY:

Well, that's encouraging—encouraging to everybody to get vaccinated.

YASMIN:

Yes. I think there's a role for all physicians: If people are hesitant to get vaccinated, we all have a role—especially in the medical community—to encourage people. People are still not going out as much, not socializing and having conversations as much, and maybe they're not seeing their PCP [primary care physician] as much.

So, I think that any opportunity you have to help someone who may be on the fence about getting vaccinated: talk to them about it, share your experience, share that you got your vaccine, and that "I did okay." •



TWO SIDES TO THE *Isles of Shoals*

Women's History and the Spirit of Place

BY LEW-ELLYN HUGHES



Celia Thaxter is shown in her garden in this 1892 painting by Childe Hassam entitled "In the Garden." *Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

"I would rather live on the islands than anywhere else in New England." Those were the words of explorer Captain John Smith when he sighted the Isles of Shoals in 1614, as he and his crew were fishing off Monhegan. He called them "remarkablest isles" and named them Smith Isles, after himself. He intended them to be his property, a payment for years of service to England. But although he wanted them at first glance and claimed them in his fashion, he never returned to make a home there. Aside from his hand-drawn map, the islands remained unnamed for another 50 years.

Back in 1614, at the time Smith sailed around the area, the islands did not have the economic attractions of fertile soil or trees for timber. Before too long, however, the islands' value increased, as they were useful to those who fished in the bountiful ocean. At the height of the islands' early popularity, they supported seasonal camps of 600 hearty souls. The cold Atlantic waters were an abundant breeding ground for cod. The promise of profit from these large yields resulted in the division of the islands between New Hampshire and Maine by the land speculators, who were granted royal title to the area.

Today, of the nine islands, four are in New Hampshire—Lunging, Seavey, Star, and White—while five are across the boundary in Maine—Appledore, Cedar, Duck, Malaga (a small island near York, not the island of the same name near Phippsburg), and Smuttynose.



Appledore Island.

Just as there are two sides to every story, to every coin, there are two sides to every island. And these islands had a dark period that would affect the settling of the entire western portion of Maine. Helen Coffin Beedy in her book *Mothers of Maine* (1895) wrote how certain “disreputable men had brought to the islands weak women, owning them in shares as they did their boats.”

Not much is known of these women. Their lives were held in such disregard that little was written of them. It is nearly impossible to find information about who they were or their circumstances. Perhaps they were indentured servants, purchased for their debts. We do know they were brought to the islands and, according to Puritans of the day, were prostituted against their wills to “profane men, scorners of religion, who drank on the Lord’s Day.”

Maine, including the offshore islands, was a district of Massachusetts at the time. The Puritan government learned of such activities—of men who were far from the mainland and morals. In the interest of the virtuous development of Maine, they forbade all women from living there. Women were not allowed to live off-shore nor on-shore. This law would affect the mainland at least as far west and north as the town of Strong. Goats and hogs were also prohibited on the islands because they were thought to contaminate fresh water wells and to consume valuable fish.

Captain John Reynolds had to petition the court in 1647 to be allowed to keep his goats, hogs, and wife. On the grounds that the goats and hogs ate the fish and spoiled the wells, his petition was not allowed, but Reynold’s request to keep his wife was granted. The court ruled that if “no further complaint come against her, she may enjoy the company of her husband.” Other petitioners were told their women could stay if they promised to “not sell neither wine, beare, nor liquor.”

It was also a concern to some of the fishermen that women would bring bad tempers and incessant talkativeness. The males who were content with a womanless society argued that females disturbed the peace with their natural liberty of tongue. From their view, women talked too much and nagged too often. The courts stipulated that if a woman desired to live in the district of Maine, she must control her tongue and temper.

Joan Ford of York is an example of what happened to an ill-behaved woman. After calling the town constable a “Cowhead Rouge,” she received nine stripes at the whipping post for her opinion. Mrs. Ford refused to repent, and for continuing to



Top: *Mothers of Maine* by Helen Coffin Beedy, published in 1895.
Bottom: “Celia Thaxter’s Garden,” 1890, by Childe Hassam.
Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Isles of Shoals were rocky, bleak, and greatly exposed to the severity of winter, but they had a refreshing, healthful atmosphere in summer, when those New England talents gathered to be inspired by nature.

abuse the constable and revile her neighbors she received another ten lashes.

The men of the day were strongly encouraged to move to and tame the interior wilderness, to build their farms and futures on that promising ground. They were given tracks of land, some as payment for military service, but the banishment of females proved to be an obstacle.

Helen Coffin Beedy's account went on to state, "Needless to add that all such efforts at colonization were failures; men alone could not make homes." After days of taming the wild woods, men were not content to return to cabins that had a cold stove and a cold bed. Eventually the prohibition of women ended, and the successful settlement of western Maine began.

By 1665 a name for the cluster of islands was settled upon: Isles of Shoals. Since that time, people have never agreed if "shoals" refers to the tidal ledges or the schools of fish. Fishing continued for over 100 years but declined drastically after 1780, when Massachusetts raised taxes on the catch, prompting families to abandon the smaller islands. Prosperity would end altogether with the onset of the Revolutionary War and the evacuation of the remaining population to the mainland for safety. The Isles of Shoals remained largely abandoned during the early 19th century, until revitalized with a differing economy by Celia Thaxter during the 1860s.

Celia Thaxter was born to Eliza and Thomas Loughton in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1835. Within a few years her father agreed to become the keeper of the lighthouse on White Island, and in subsequent years the family also lived on Smuttynose Island and Hog Island. Thomas Loughton purchased the latter and renamed it Appledore Island after an historic fishing village in Devon, England. Throughout her girlhood Celia and her two brothers were home-schooled by their father. Celia received an unusually broad education for a girl of her generation, although she always felt inhibited by a lack of formal credentials.

In 1847 a wealthy man from Watertown, Massachusetts, came to Appledore in an effort to recover from nervous exhaustion. Levi Thaxter was educated at Harvard College and trained at Harvard Law School, but he did not practice law. Instead, he spent his ample free time attending salons at Elizabeth Peabody's bookshop in Boston. He was acquainted with the Concord Transcendentalists and all the leading literary and abolitionist figures in the region, from Margaret Fuller to William Dean Howells.

During his visit to Appledore, Levi Thaxter offered to invest \$2,000 so Thomas Loughton could build a resort hotel, the first on the islands. He also recognized the genius of 12-year-old Celia and agreed to become her private tutor. During the next few years, he paid for Celia to attend a boarding academy in South Boston. As soon as she graduated from this finishing school at age 16, they were wed, in what her biographer Jane Vallier in *Poet on Demand* (1982) describes as an arranged marriage.

Although she and her husband resided in Watertown and then Newtonville, Massachusetts, Celia Thaxter established a summer artist colony on beautiful Appledore during the 1860s, attracting writers, painters, musicians, and poets. Numerous famous people—Harriet Beecher Stowe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Sarah Orne Jewett, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Henry David Thoreau, John Greenleaf Whittier, William Morris Hunt, Childe Hassam, and others of the Massachusetts elite—were visitors to the grand Appledore House. The Isles of Shoals were rocky, bleak, and greatly exposed to the severity of winter, but they had a refreshing, healthful atmosphere in summer, when those New England talents gathered to be inspired by nature.

Celia and Levi Thaxter had three sons, but by 1872 they had become estranged. Although they began to lead separate lives, they continued to maintain a household jointly. In this period, Celia successfully pursued and published her writing career. Her renown as an author was assured by *Among the Isles of Shoals* (1873), a combination travel guide and natural history handbook.

During 1880 Celia and Levi built the sort of mansion called a shingle-style "cottage" at Kittery Point, Maine, where Levi died in 1884. Celia continued to recite her poetry and host the summer gatherings on Appledore for the growing tourist trade. Her reputation was enhanced by *My Lighthouse, and Other Poems* (1890), which established her as one of the most popular poets in the country, and by the highly influential book, *An Island Garden* (1894). Illustrated by Childe Hassam, this book was an enduring prototype of personal essays about gardening. Celia died at the end of the summer season that same year, at the age of 59. She is buried on Appledore with her brothers, while Levi and their sons lie at rest at Kittery Point.

From the anonymous, unknown women of the early Isles of Shoals, to Celia Thaxter, who can be known as an eloquent author and distinctive personality, the island's long history has its two sides. Celia's famous garden had provided fresh flowers for the resort hotel, its beauty inspiring many of the writers and painters who saw it during her lifetime. Although Appledore House was destroyed by fire in 1914, the garden was reconstructed in 1977 to look much as it did under Celia's care in the late 1800s. It is faithfully maintained by those at the Shoals Marine Laboratory, giving summer visitors the experience of stepping back in time.

For more information, see Helen Coffin Beedy. *Mothers of Maine*. Portland: Thurston Print, 1895;

"What We Are Learning About the Isle of Shoals." <http://www.seacoastnh.com/History/History-Matters/what-we-are-learning-about-the-isles-of-shoals/>; and

"Isles of Shoals (White Island) Lighthouse." <https://www.lighthousefriends.com/light.asp?ID=664>.

SUSAN CORBETT

Changing the World, One Connection at a Time

BY SHEILA D. GRANT



Susan Corbett is a passionate advocate for providing broadband access and Internet know-how to Mainers of all ages.

In a world so reliant on Internet connectivity, there can be no equity without digital access and digital literacy. So says Susan Corbett, 66, who launched the National Digital Equity Center in 2017, with a mission of providing broadband access, digital equity, and digital inclusion to people of all ages in rural Maine communities. Susan is passionate about making sure every Mainer has access to a computer, a reliable Internet connection, and the skills to use them to best advantage.

“I think my background as a medical office nurse makes sense,” she said. “Nurses are very caring, nurturing. Being helpful to people—that’s what nurses do. They educate people, help them when they are sick. It’s not that far of a stretch when you think of what’s the mo-

ivation here. You want to help people get connected and to have the infrastructure. That’s the how. And digital equivalency and inclusion is the why. It’s important so people can connect. How many older people are connecting with their grandchildren via video conferencing for the very first time during this pandemic?”

“We live in a state where the time-distance-travel is a barrier for healthcare and education,” she continued. “Can we get better outcomes if people can connect with a healthcare provider more frequently rather than a two-hour or four-hour trek to see a specialist? Every one of my days is a happy day, because I know that I am making a difference in the lives of people, and to organizations connecting with their clients for the first time.”

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FROM NURSING TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

In Massachusetts, Susan worked as a medical office nurse, office manager, consultant, and eventually, she opened her own medical billing service.

“I was around at the time when medical practices all had paper systems, and I was in that group of practices that transitioned to electronic billing and electronic medical records, so I did a lot of improvements and training around that,” said Susan. “I did not have an IT background, but somebody had to figure it out, right?”

When she moved to Maine in 1998, Susan’s medical billing service had clients all up and down the eastern seaboard. “In 2003 or so, many of my medical practices started talking about sending information electronically. In order to do that, I would need a broadband connection, so I started looking around.”

After a less-than-fruitful conversation with an engineer from the local telephone company, “I stamped my foot and said, ‘But, they have wireless in Taipei. Why can’t I have it in Jonesport?’”

Susan ended up running her company via an expensive fractional T1 line, but, “I thought, there’s got to be a better way. In 2005, I met with some engineers and pitched the idea of a wireless network. They invited me to join that wireless company, and the next thing you know, I’m the CEO of Axiom! We put wireless into Jonesport and then all over Washington County. We were true ‘last-mile broadband’ where nobody else would go.”

After the 2008 recession, Axiom qualified for grant funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. “We had a program for farmers and fishermen in Washington County, for the typical natural-resource-based industries, to start introducing them to technology,” Susan recalled.

Another grant allowed Axiom to connect the College of Nursing and Health Professions in Lewiston with the Down East Community Hospital in Machias. “We trained two cohorts of RNs,” Susan said. “These were nontraditional students who wouldn’t have been able to travel.”

The John T. Gorman Foundation invited the company to apply for funding in 2012 to cover two additional years of digital literacy programming. Axiom reached

an additional 2,000 learners, with classes offered on a flexible schedule at 50 locations across Washington County.

“That led to the Maine Department of Education asking us to take over the adult education program in Machias,” Susan said. “As a for-profit company, I didn’t think that felt right, so we founded the nonprofit Axiom Education & Training Center in July 2014, and we moved all of the education programs over to the nonprofit. We also expanded digital literacy around the state and offered after-school STEM programs.”

In 2018, Mark Ouellette took the helm as CEO and president at Axiom. Rather than retire, Susan, moved over to the nonprofit center full-time. In October 2018, she launched the National Digital Equity Center, a program of the Axiom Education & Training Center.

Recently widowed, Susan said, “I am grateful for my work because it gives me lots to do.”

The center offers curriculum in “three buckets.” There are classes geared toward small business owners around how to use Microsoft products, QuickBooks, and WordPress. There are classes for home and school, “which includes a lot of Google training for parents, and a class on how to cut the cord if they want to dump cable or satellite, and we teach Internet safety throughout all of our programs,” Susan said.

The third bucket is classes for older adults, with content on “how to connect with their family, friends, and healthcare providers; learning about apps for managing healthcare and monitoring vital records and signs; and learning how to use devices. This last topic relates to when, say, adult children give Mom or Dad the leftover laptop, but then what do the lucky recipients do with the computer?”

“You can be any age and take any class,” Susan added. “There are no restrictions, and all of the classes are free, so you can take as many as you wish.”

COVID DRIVES CONNECTIVITY

There were concerns about moving all of the classes online during the pandemic, which could have further deepened the digital divide. “Typically, people who come to our in-person classes are novice computer users. Now all of our classes are on Zoom

with live instructors, but what about the people who don't know how to get online?"

To reach older Mainers, "we got a little bit of funding and purchased 100 tablet devices for people 70 and older who don't have a device or a connection to the Internet. We give it to them free for three months and assign them a tutor. Typically, the first class is over the phone to teach them how to turn on the device," Susan said.

The program has resulted in partnerships with dozens of organizations willing to raise funds for more tablet devices. "They raise money, and we provide training to that organization's constituents or clients," said Susan. "We just raised about \$200,000 to get tablets for low-income individuals. We assign them a tutor, and they must take an Internet safety class. In the first 10 days, we had almost 1,000 requests for those 250 tablets."

The organization has funding to continue the tablet program for the next two to three years, "And then I suspect it may go even further than that because the need is so great," she said. "The pandemic showed how deep the divide was here in Maine. We had students that didn't have a connection, or couldn't afford a connection or a device, and workers, too, and families that did not have connections that could support everyone in the home that needed to be online.

"But the bucket I lose the most sleep over is the older adults, already struggling with isolation and loneliness. Getting technology into the hands of older adults is particularly important," Susan said. "We want all US citizens to be able to participate in today's digital society. It's necessary for employment, for access to services. That is achievable by promoting affordable broadband, affordable equipment, digital literacy and training, and public computer access. The tablet program addresses all of these. It has a SIM card so it can connect to a cellphone network. For somebody just starting to use technology, a tablet is a good first step."

There is a great deal of gratification in seeing older students succeed. "I have a video where an 80-year-old man talks about never having used technology before and needing to learn how," she said. "He's very active and on the board of the local health center. All of a sudden [because of COVID], he's grounded. He wanted to participate in the board meetings on Zoom, so we assigned him a tutor and he took multiple sessions. At the end, he said that his favorite thing is that his tutor taught him how to do Google Earth, so now he can travel the globe from his chair! Age doesn't matter. No matter how old you are, you're going to be just fine. We'll help you."

Susan does not foresee a drop in the need for digital literacy after the pandemic. "We've all had to learn new skills in order to continue our educations, keep a job—for those who had the option. And older adults have needed to be connected to healthcare. The pandemic has been horrific, but I think you have to look for the shining light in the darkness, and I think technology is that shining light. But that also means that if people don't have the connection, the equipment, or don't know how to use it, then we are leaving them behind, and we, as a society, need to fix that."

For information about National Digital Equity Center programs, visit digitalequitycenter.org, email info@digitalequitycenter.org, or call 207-259-5010. •



Top: Now widowed, Susan enjoys her work, and spending time with her two adult children and three grandchildren.

Bottom: Susan's Auntie Sandy started learning about technology in her 70s. Now, at 98, she battles isolation by reading to her 5-year-old granddaughter every night and connecting with family and friends on Facebook. Contributed photo

Alex Serra is the founder and principal of Serra Public Affairs, a substantial and growing star in the constellation of Maine's consultancies.



ABOUT THE COMPANY:

Serra Public Affairs offers a variety of services, from media strategy, to video content creation, to persuasive opinion leader outreach.

We wanted to know a few things about Alex: What motivates a person to create this kind of business in such a fragmented and fractious media climate? How does a communications firm distinguish itself from the competition? What insights does Alex have to share with other women who are—or are going to be—leaders in Maine business?

Maine Women Magazine: *What motivated you to create your business?*

Alex Serra: I saw an opportunity in Maine's market that I thought I could help fill due to my own diverse career. There are a lot of amazing lobbyists in Maine, terrific content creators and earned media consultants. But there wasn't a shop where all of those services could be offered for clients out of one coordinated group. Serra Public Affairs is designed to act as a comprehensive internal public affairs department to complement (or replace) one within a company or organization. Our clients are looking for a diversity of services and our approach is to offer these services all out of one shop with specialists in their areas of expertise. So, whether it is media relations, videography, photography, government affairs, copywriting, or event planning, we provide clients with a wholistic portfolio of services that we then coordinate so they don't have to have four different agencies working for them that is then incumbent on them to synchronize.

MWM: *Is that what sets you off from your competitors?*

AS: Yes, and I've been really, really lucky in bringing incredible talent together. Everyone on our team is super passionate about their areas of expertise, detail oriented, and driven to excel as a matter of personal and team pride. We have a deep bench that's always ready to bring it for our clients.

MWM: *And what's special about what you, yourself, bring to the table?*

AS: There's no doubt that my own diverse background helps a lot. From growing up in the heart of New York City and then moving to small town Maine, to having varied educational and professional experiences that span law school, journalism, corporate life, and nonprofit experience, I understand what communications, public affairs, and government affairs VPs (and their teams) are looking for. It's also important to be aware of how their different audiences hear things differently. This work allows me to exercise my creative bones too—so I also really, really, really love what we do. There's not a day that I am not fully aware of how lucky I am to do what I love.

MWM: *What's been the greatest success in your business?*

AS: Building the team that we have. I've always said that it doesn't matter where you are or what you're doing, it matters who you're with. I want to get up every day and work with awesome, talented, and collaborative people who inspire me and who I genuinely love to spend time with. That's exactly what we have. Our clients know they can reach any of us at any time—we are in a 24/7 business and the entire team rises to that expectation every day. It's nothing short of inspiring.

MWM: *What is your family background?*

AS: I'm the only child of parents who didn't start a family until later in life. My mom was 42, which was unheard of at the time. My parents were denizens of the New York City/Greenwich Village arts world. My mother and father were both very involved in theater in the 1970s and 1980s. They stressed the importance of education – TV was not a big thing in my house. We always had a lot of super colorful people around the house, lots of big personalities who were all passion-driven people. Their friends were very much like a part of our family; the ballet dancer/mathematician, the jazz composer, the writer, the journalist, the actor, the comedian, they were like aunts and uncles.

These very highly intellectual, highly creative, artistic individuals influenced my life and definitely shaped my own group of childhood friends, who were largely the children of artists. It was a multicultural, inspired world, New York in the late 70s and 80s. It always stuck with me that Mayor David Dinkins called New York a "great mosaic." I think that was spot on.

MWM: *You went to a women's college, Smith. What did you most take away from that experience?*

AS: The number one thing was that every single campus leader was a woman: editor of the newspaper, president of the student body, captain of every athletic team—all women. It really affirmed my

belief that I could do anything I wanted to do. I just had to decide what that was. Women were never told to sit down. Smith made me very comfortable to be a woman in my own work skin.

MWM: *Is the path you followed similar to what you expected of yourself when you were younger?*

AS: In college, on our first day, they made us write on a little piece of paper what we wanted to be when we grew up. They wanted to see if we'd feel the same way when we graduated. On my little piece of paper, I wrote that I wanted to be a campaign manager and a speech writer, which is essentially what I do, in my own way, with our content and communications work. I was pretty close, at eighteen years old, to knowing the type of work I wanted to do. Right after graduation, I went straight into politics, did that for a year, and then I went to law school.

MWM: *And law school is what brought you to Maine?*

AS: Yes, and during my second semester I began working at WCSH-6, editing tape, and running the teleprompter for the morning show. I would go into work around 1am and work until noon. Then I would take afternoon classes and do it all again the next day.

MWM: *When did you sleep?*

AS: You know, you don't really sleep when you're 22!

MWM: *Have you had discouraging professional experiences related to your gender?*

AS: I have been very blessed with supportive men in my educational and career experiences, I have never felt that I wasn't let into the room because of my gender. I do think the underlying currents of sexism are rapidly evaporating. That being said, I am keenly aware that, for example, there are still more men than women on professional association boards. That's just a fact. I don't think it's because women are being deliberately and consciously excluded . . . at least not in Maine. Instead, I think it's partially because women haven't yet climbed to the top of organizations in the numbers that men have, so they're generally not in top positions of CEO, president, or senior VP. I think there are more women in director and senior director roles, but they get skipped for those seats because the titles aren't there . . . and so they don't frame the conversation as much.

Another thing that I am aware of is the need for networks to open-up and become more welcoming towards all genders. Let's not forget people who don't identify as men or women, right? Transgender, nonbinary people and all gender identities have important voices and belong at the table as well.

MWM: *In your experience is the business climate in Maine more or less welcoming to women leaders than in other places? Is Maine ahead of or behind the curve?*

AS: In a state with political leaders like Margaret Chase Smith, Olympia Snowe, Chellie Pingree, Susan Collins and now Janet Mills—all these accomplished women—there's no way that one could possibly say that Maine isn't accepting of women leaders. That would be false.

But I think America still has a long way to go. Once we've had a supreme court that's nine women for 200 years, then we can have the conversation of whether we've caught up. Once we've had 200 years of only female presidents, then we can start asking 'have we caught up?' But until then, the answer is 'no, we haven't.'

The same is true, by the way, for nonwhite people or LGBTQ people.

MWM: *Do you find it difficult to navigate in the PR space in these divided and fractious times . . . I'm talking politically, culturally, racially, where we've got a such division?*

AS: Getting a message out is tougher when you have a more divided citizenry because people are very much squarely in their own echo chambers. The concept of meaningful conversation with people you disagree with has become almost revolutionary and bipartisanship has become an unusual thing to actually put into practice. People like to talk about it but actually being bipartisan, actually occupying that space, that's a pretty radical thing these days. It is more difficult because you have to really know your audience and know how to speak to them in ways that they can hear.

It's not impossible, it's just different. The methods are the same but now there are many more distinct audiences, which multiplies the level of effort you need to put into it. It's why we're in business.

MWM: *What new challenges are you taking on?*

I'm excited about our new podcast, Serra Speaks, where I talk with women about business. Again, this was an attempt to fill a void I saw. There are a lot of people who talk about women in business, but there aren't a lot of forums for women to discuss business. By doing that with our podcast, it's like getting beyond just the gender conversation: simply having conversations about business with women and not about the fact that they're women in business. These are distinct things, and we've lost sight of this. I guess I'm just very comfortable having the conversations other people aren't.



Photo by Randy Ury

WORKING WITH WOOD

Ann Flannery and Lynette Breton

Passing on the Skills—and the Satisfaction

BY SUSAN OLCOTT

From Michigan to New Mexico to Maine, Ann Flannery's journey has not just been geographic. It has been a journey of learning craftsmanship and now sharing her talents with others.

Step inside Ann's boat shop just up the road from the iconic Maine fishing village of Cundys Harbor, and you might find her patiently helping a young student to chisel away the handle of a wooden mallet.

Donning a carpenter's apron with a sharp pencil tucked behind her ear, she looks up to survey what is happening. Her bright, airy shop is tucked in an opening amongst the pines. These are the students in her boat-building class. They range in age from 8 to 16 and come from neighboring communities, ready to help build a small wooden skiff over the course of the spring.

This is the fourth year Ann has run the spring workshop as part of a collaboration with the Holbrook Community Foundation (HCF). HCF is a local non-profit dedicated to the protection of the coastal heritage of Harpswell, including the working waterfront and commercial fishing. It provides opportunities for education about the local marine environment.

Ann connected with HCF not long after she moved to Cundys Harbor and then hatched the idea to build a boat with students to benefit the foundation. They raffle off each year's boat in the spring. She was even able to run a class in 2020, with a limited number of students wearing masks for sessions in her shop. At the end of the season, they managed to launch the *Hakuna Matata* off Holbrooks Wharf. The 12-foot long work skiff ended up being included in the 2020 Worldwide Classic Boat Show put on by Off Center Harbor, a boat building organization based in Brooklin, Maine.

Boats have always been part of Ann's life. Growing up in Michigan, she sailed on Lake Michigan with her family. She moved far away from the water for college—all the way to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ann began her career in woodworking out west but, she recalls, "The ocean was calling me." When a friend mentioned the Apprenticeshop, a boatbuilding program begun at the Maine Maritime Museum, she decided to move to the east coast.



In Maine, she not only learned the craft of boat building, but she also met a kindred spirit who became her business partner for eleven years—Lynette Breton. “When we met in 1984, we were two young women in the woodworking trade. Rare!” says Ann. They ran Breton-Flannery Woodworks together for 11 years. Lynette recalls, “Creating a supportive team of two women in our non-traditional field was very helpful to both of us.” Adds Ann, “I can modestly say we were pioneers of women in the trade.”

One could say the two women are still pioneers of women in the trade. While they no longer own a business together, Lynette has her own studio at her home in Harpswell where she designs and builds custom furniture and interior woodwork. Also, she has created the Heirloom Flower Press, a small product made from historic woods that allows her to be part of the craft fair community.

Sharing knowledge in her field has also been important to Lynette. “So, after a decade of teaching at the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Rockport, I realized I wanted to create a learning community here at my studio,” she says. She developed a one-day workshop where she teaches people how to carve sculpted kitchen utensils and woodenware using hand tools. “It is very satisfying to make something out of wood with your own hands that you can use daily,” she adds. This workshop has led to a supportive Monday night carving group which includes Ann and other carving enthusiasts.

Ann has been passing the trade down to young students as a part of her workshop. But, this year she has added another level of mentoring—an apprentice. Adelaide McKelvey is a freshman in high school. She helped build the *Selkie* when she was just 12 years old. “I always loved building things and using my hands to create art out of other materials, so joining the class was a no-brainer for me,” she says. “But the kind of work we were doing was definitely new and something I was not experienced in,” she says. Ann has a way of making people feel comfortable at whatever their level. “She has never made me feel like I don’t know what I’m doing. She has a seemingly



Photos courtesy Ann Flannery

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Photo by Lynette Breton



endless amount of patience and empathy towards her students, and I truly respect her both as a mentor and as a person,” says Adelaide.

Adelaide is now sharing her own skills with younger students, looking to Ann as a model. “I really enjoy being a source of inspiration for people, and I have some memories as a kid of not having someone like that in certain classes that I attended. So, being able to provide that is something that I try to do,” she says. “They also remind me what it’s like to first learn how to do something. And I think that that reminder gives you patience with mistakes and mess-ups, and removes the misconception that perfection is the only part of learning that’s worth anything.” She has learned problem-solving skills straight from Ann. “It’s fascinating to watch her fix problems that would probably send me into a panic were I to try and solve them on my own.”

Although Ann and Lynette now each run separate businesses, they still work together whenever they can. “It is great to know that when the phone rings and it is Ann, we get a chance to work on something else together or figure out something that takes two heads. It is priceless to have that. I know she feels the same,” says Lynette. The two women had planned on teaching a class together last summer. “Well . . . COVID got in the way,” says Ann. The Woodworking for Women workshop was going to be a week-long course focused on making woodenware like utensils, bowls, and platters. They’re hoping to give it another try later this year or next. It’s a chance for them to combine their skills again and to help cultivate those skills in other women.

As for what else is on the horizon for these dynamic Maine women, their shared passion is sure to guide them to new, creative pursuits. What is certain is that they will continue their dedication to teaching and sharing their skills with other women throughout generations. •

What is Scoliosis?

Scoliosis is a three-dimensional spinal deformity characterized by a side-to-side curvature combined with rotation of the vertebra.

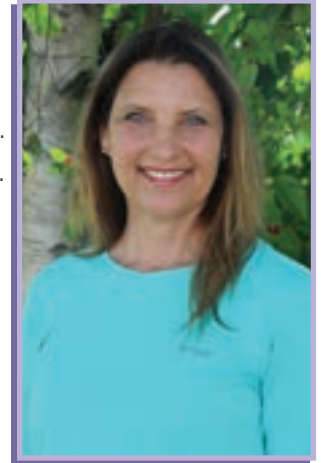
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Aija Paegle, PT, DPT, CFMT, is a Doctor of Physical Therapy and a Schroth Barcelona C2 Certified Therapist. She has 17 years of PT experience, 6 of which have been specifically dedicated to helping patients with scoliosis manage their curvatures, reduce pain, and take control over a healthy, fit and active life.



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Photo by Belle Fall

JANAY WOODRUFF: SINGER and Founder of the Non-Profit *Coded by Young Women of Color*

BY PAM FERRIS-OLSON

Janay Woodruff is an energetic entrepreneur whose aim is to create systemic change and uplift marginalized communities, particularly for women of color. It is fitting that the St. Louis-bred dynamo first visited Portland during what she described as a polar vortex. Her husband Bill brought her to town to see if she could handle Maine winters. “Of course, I didn’t have the right clothes,” she laughed, “but it was so beautiful. It’s a paradise. Who could turn it down?”

Janay, whose stage name and band are known as JanaeSound, has produced several Bey Day tributes to Beyonce.

These performances are a diverse showcase of people of color and members from the LGBT community. She’s also produced several Juneteenth celebrations. Last year, the concert raised \$10,000 for non-profits that support Black Mainers. Janay proudly proclaims that “Every time I have a big audience or a big stage, I bring everyone with me from my marginalized communities.”

The singer loves to perform and recognizes that her performances are a platform to bring attention to things that she thinks are important. In Maine, she sees a “unique opportunity to touch and create systemic change because we don’t

have that many people of color here in this state. Not only do I want to empower and uplift the people of color we have here, but I want to draw more young diverse talent to the state.”

Janay first landed on stage at the age of nine as part of the cast of the St. Louis Opera Theatre’s staging of Giacomo Puccini’s opera *La bohème*. She long dreamed of singing professionally, but her parents convinced her when she attended Washington University to keep her options open. She graduated with a degree in English and did some substitute teaching and tutoring. But soon Janay was ready to devote herself to

a singing career. As a teenager, she had learned how to get things done as she helped her parents build an aggregate hauling business. The young woman came to understand that success is “hard work and luck. You can work as hard as you want but you need an opportunity.” Her energy and determination have been the forces that have broken down barriers and opened doors to opportunity. And what Janay is doing for herself, she is determined to do for others. This is how her non-profit Coded by Young Women of Color was

born. It’s designed to help young women of color develop the skills and find jobs in the technology sector.

The idea for Coded by Young Women of Color grew out of a local merger of art and technology—specifically, from a collaboration between Janay’s band JanaeSound and Portland-

based Yarn Corporation, a company that brings the power of virtual reality (VR) to storytelling.

The collaboration brought together Janay’s band and a 12-person string quartet and coders from Yarn Corporation, who created a dazzling light show for Janay’s original song “Diamonds.” Janay wanted to know more about VR, so she took a trip to New York City with Yarn Corporation to see an



exhibit at the Tribeca Film Festival. While she was intrigued by the technology, she noticed that “there was no one there who looked like me. There were few women and no folks of color.” She discovered that women of color make up less than five percent of the tech work force in the United States. Yet, she knew that women of color are consumers of innovation. Janay felt that these women should be part of the creative teams that produce the technology. These competing ideas energized Janay’s entrepreneurial instincts.

Janay knew that if she didn’t see other women of color at Tribeca, there had to be a barrier to them getting there. She wanted to know how to dismantle that barrier. As a community leader Janay wanted to help people be part of the tech team, but she wasn’t going to lead anyone until she knew that a place had been prepared for them. The access point Janay helped create was a VR boot camp. Typically, such programs cost thousands of dollars. So, Janay had to raise money for bootcamp and find companies willing to hire the new trained coders. To that end, she is raising money through concerts, and she is partnering with local companies and educational institutions to run the first boot camp and hire the graduates of this summer’s first boot camp.

Janay has had her share of encounters with barriers. She’s overcome them with hard work and moxie. Janay uses the lyrics of her songs to offer ways forward. “I have learned not to dwell on feeling rotten; instead, I rush to a pad and pen. I scribble it all down to help me process, but it makes for good song writing. My brand is all about uplifting and overcoming obstacles.” One of Janay’s songs is entitled “Break Me Down.” It’s an anthem she wrote after a particularly unpleasant experience that happened to her. “I had to write it until it was funny and uplifting and then it felt good. It felt that the event, the trauma, didn’t have a hold on me. And, by singing about it, it didn’t win over me.”

The lyrics of her anthem are simple. She writes them that way so people can learn them quickly. Some of the words are, “Once I’m in motion / you cant stop me / you cant slow me down.” Hearing people chant the songs during her concerts makes Janay realize she is doing what she is supposed to be doing. And Portland is where she is supposed to be doing this work. It’s a place that Janay describes as “small but mighty” and full of love.

For more information about JanaeSound, please visit www.janaesound.com. To learn more about Coded by Young Women of Color visit www.cywoc.org. This year’s Juneteenth concert will be live-streamed from the State Theatre at 8 pm on June 19. •



Photo courtesy of the artist



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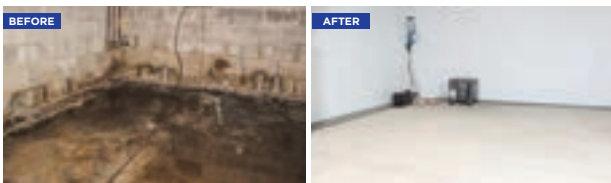
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All photos courtesy Sally Bower Levi

SALLY BOWER LEVI

Renovating a House, One Step at a Time

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

Sally Bower Levi is a production designer who makes sets for commercials and films being made in New York City and elsewhere. She also owns a design company, Badhus Interior Design. She is a visual artist. She is completing a novel. And after settling in Rockland over 10 years ago, she finally found “the right one”—the right house to buy, that is. Now, with the help of several other people, she is restoring her treasured historic home, doing as much as possible by herself. With her vision and meticulous attention to detail, she is learning as she goes. It was a pleasure to speak with Sally about work, life, renovation, and love.

MARY:

You’re originally from New York City? Why did you move to Rockland, Maine?

SALLY BOWER LEVI:

I grew up in New York City, but I’ve been coming to Maine for a long time. My parents were both artists, so we lived in New York City, but the family would come stay in Maine, to get away from the city. We all, all of us, fell in love with it. I’m passionate about Maine. The more time I can spend in Maine, the happier I am and my dog is.

MARY:

Tell me about your career—what is it like?

SALLY:

In New York, I am a production designer, working on commercial shoots. I make the sets.

I also own an interior design business, Badhus Interior Design. It was based in New York City, but I’ve moved it here to Maine, now that I’m permanently based in Maine. Most of my clients are in San Francisco and New York—I did offices and residential homes. I would like to start working for Maine clients.

MARY:

On commercials, you’re a sub-contractor who gets called in? And you can do some of the work from Maine?

SALLY:

Yes. I get called per job. I just did a commercial the last couple weeks in New York, but I get to work remotely during the prep out of Maine. Then I have to go in for the shoot days. Then that job ends, and then I have another job coming up that’s also going to be





in New York, another commercial with the different company. I work a lot. The design world, it's busy. Ninety percent of my clients are repeating clients. I think I do good work, and I'm very direct and honest. I don't try to pull any fast ones on anybody. I think that's what's appreciated. Nowadays, it's often all a show. Everyone is putting on a show.

MARY:

What makes you so independent? What do you attribute that courage to?

SALLY:

Somebody once called me "scrappy." I believe that if you're willing to put in the work, then you can do anything. The hardest bit can be figuring out where to begin.

I remember when I was in my 20s, I wanted to go to India on my own and I had booked my ticket, but I was scared. I said to myself to just take one step at a time. That's what I live by. I take one step at a time. I never look very far into the future. I say, "Okay, can I do this one next step?"—which in this case, was to go downstairs and get on the bus to the airport.

I said to myself, "That's all you have to do. You can turn around after that, but just get on the bus to the airport." Then when I got to the airport, I said, "Just get through security, and then you can turn around and come home." Then once I got through security I said, "Just go to the gate." As long as I only do the next step, then I don't have to be too brave.

MARY:

What made you want to take that trip to India?

SALLY:

I was doing a documentary on women's clothing. Somebody had gotten me in touch with a famous fashion designer in India. She was a very, very high-powered, inspiring woman in India. I went to her factory. I learned a lot from her.

Unfortunately, what I learned on a lot in my travels is that the main difference between people who do things and people who don't is the way that they are raised and the opportunities that have been given to them. She had had a lot of opportunities given to her. It doesn't mean that she didn't work very hard to get where she was. She did.

I am always in a search to talk to that person who has that success story where they did it on their own. They didn't marry into money or have their father give them the house. I don't know why that matters so much to me. I think it's because it's changing history when you do something on your own.

MARY:

How did you find your house in Rockland?

SALLY:

I saw this house in Rockland and sent the owner an email. I found the email address in the town records. I wrote, "I no-

ticed that the house that you own is empty and has been empty for a while. I love your property, and I would love to buy it."

He got back to me that he would think about it. I wrote back immediately with an offer. Then I didn't hear back for a few days, and I was thinking, "I guess maybe my offer wasn't high enough." All of a sudden, an email came back saying, "Offer accepted."

I decided not to use realtors, and so I did all of the research, made the contract myself, and sent it to him. I'm still friends with the man who sold me the house. It's been a perfect experience. People say that you get buyer's remorse. I've not had a single second of buyer's remorse.

MARY:

How have you approached the renovation work?

SALLY:

I decided to become my own contractor. I did a lot of research. I studied. I hired very good people—a plumber, an electrician, and two carpenters. I did all the designs myself. I did 3D models for them to work off of.

Now, I live in the carriage house, which is finished. I am starting demo next week on the main house, which was built in 1856. We're taking out the floors, the chimney, and we're putting some structural beams. Then we're putting in a new flooring system. The amount I've learned from doing it myself is beyond anything I would have ever expected. It really has benefited me as a designer, as an interior designer. Also, just for myself, it keeps me entertained. I love learning all of the intricacies of building.

MARY:

Overall, what has the move from New York City to Rockland, Maine, been like?

SALLY:

Well, I initially moved here in 2008 . . . I've worked for the Farnsworth. I did a program for them for many years called Rockland Shorts. Then I also worked for Maine Media Workshops. I taught filmmaking over there for many years.

Along the way, I've made a lot of friends. I am in a relationship with a man I met last summer here in Maine. I live in this

really great neighborhood. I have a real sense of community, literally just around the block, and my dog has made so many friends and goes down to the beach with the dogs just in this neighborhood. I enjoy going into town, where I know a few owners of restaurants. Plus, I love time with myself! I don't feel like I lack anything. I have a natural community.

MARY:

Do you see yourself marrying some day?

SALLY:

I was engaged a few years ago to a very nice man, but we had a lot of issues, specifically, with my independence and me not 100 percent sure where I stood on having kids or not.

It's funny. My whole life, I never really knew where I would want to get married. I do remember after I closed on my house, and I was living here, I always said, "If I ever do get married, it would have to be in this backyard. That's the only place I could ever imagine myself getting married."

I do want to mention that I was under contract, though, six times before this house. I almost bought six other houses, four of which are in Rockland.

MARY:

What happened to them?

SALLY:

I'm a very, very detail-oriented person. I dig in deep when I go to buy a house, and I make sure I know what I'm buying. All of the houses had very big issues, either structurally or design-wise that once you were allowed to get the inspection, you would find out.

A lot of people, when they buy houses, they just fall in love and then they give a blind eye to what they're purchasing.

I did not do that. I instead went in, and I would get dirty. I would crawl in the crawlspace. I would climb into the attic. I would look to see, "What am I getting myself into?" I didn't jump in with my eyes closed at all. I did all of the research and more than anybody would ever want to do. I did a strategic profit analysis. All of these houses, it turned out that they were very problematic.

I think people don't want to see the ugliness. They just want to see what they want to see. Then they end up getting into something and not be able to get out of it. That's the same with marriage, in my opinion.

I'm unmarried, but that's because I didn't want to have a blind eye. I've definitely had a lot of very serious relationships and romances, but I've never had a relationship that I wanted to last a lifetime.

Oh, my heart's been broken. I definitely put myself out there, 100 percent. And my heart's been broken by some of the houses that I had to let go of.

MARY:

When do you see your house being finished, or is it always going to be a project?

SALLY:

My house will be livable by June 1st. It just won't be finished. Then I could see it finished in as little as a year and as much as two years from now.

Right now, I don't need a second floor because I'm just one person. I'm only really making a one-story house at the moment. Then I see in the future turning it into a two-story house. I was

thinking that the second floor could just be a nice storage unit for now, for my artwork. I used to do a lot of artwork.

MARY:

Do you feel like a steward of this beautiful home? I mean, it's beautiful.

SALLY:

Thank you. Yes. This is actually a beloved property, not just by me but by all of the community. The woman who used to own it was cherished by friends and neighbors. She had such good energy, and she took such good care of the property. I do feel like she left big shoes for me to fill.

She was incredibly independent. She lived to be 93. Her husband died in 1990, and she died in 2017. The last 27 years of her life she lived by herself in this house. She mowed her own lawn at 93 years old. She kept a beautiful garden, kept up the house, and kept having company over. She was just something to really aspire to be.

I hope to have an open door to friends and family always and to have a welcoming home that people like to come and celebrate in. When the pandemic is over, I hope to have lots of garden parties because that backyard is so wonderful. •





Photos by Lindsey Renee Banda

Making a Childhood Dream into a Business:

LAUREN BEVERIDGE and SCOUT AND BEAN

BY PAM FERRIS-OLSON

Resilient, resourceful, hardworking, and creative. Those are the characteristics Lauren Beveridge uses to describe Maine women. In fact, the 32-year-old resident of Lincolnville epitomizes these qualities herself, and they aptly describe her family, as well. As a little girl, her great grandmother taught Lauren to knit, and her mother taught her how to sew. She recalls that her father was always working on the family's cars as well as being a talented builder. Working with her hands was an activity, a way of being, woven into her identity from an early age. As she puts it, "I always knew I wanted to make things and work for myself."

Lauren, who grew up in Oakland, Maine, remembers collecting arts-and-crafts books and dabbling in whatever she could create. She made hemp jewelry, knit scarves, and hats, and sewed messenger bags and skirts.

At Messalonskee High School, Lauren was in constant motion, playing field hockey, basketball, and lacrosse, serving on the student council, and co-chairing the yearbook committee. At the University of Maine in Farmington, Lauren majored in psychology. After college, for seven years, she worked in Massachusetts as a nanny. She taught children how to use a sewing machine, needle felt, and sew costumes. During this time, Lauren also became a member of the Weston Arts and Crafts Association.

In 2016, Lauren, now married to her husband Josh, moved back to Maine. They settled on the property of Josh's grandfather, with their new home built on the footprint of Josh's grandfather's

farmhouse. Josh's grandfather, Lyford Beveridge, had bought the property when he returned home from serving in WWII. The original house burned, but the stone foundation remained standing for decades. Josh, his dad, Lauren's dad, and numerous friends and family members have pitched in to construct Lauren and Josh's house. Lauren designed the floorplan, including a large craft studio. That room is now the heart of Scout and Bean, Lauren's company.

The name for her business comes from two beloved, imagined beings: Scout is the main character in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, one of Lauren's favorite books. And Bean was a nickname that Lauren and Josh used during pregnancy for the growing baby. "Both words are near to my heart, so it seemed like a good fit when naming my business."

Scout and Bean offers a collection of bowls, baskets, bags, home decorations, and accessories, all made by hand by Lauren from natural cotton cord.

Basketmaking—woven and coil—is a time-honored skill. Nantucket Lightships baskets, for example, were woven by crew on light ships, or floating lighthouses. The baskets were used for a variety of household purposes. Making them was a valued trade that was passed on from one man to another.

Lauren learned the craft of making baskets of rope coils from a do-it-yourself article in a magazine. She got out the Singer sewing machine her mother bought her years earlier and began to exper-





iment. The technique of working with cotton rope is not new, but Lauren strives to be different and original in her creations. She has created four designs that are uniquely hers. Lauren says her Summit Pack design is striking similar to the “good ol’ Maine ice fishing pack,” and the Rope Pail design is her take on the bucket seen in the children’s book *Blueberries for Sal*.

(Lauren does not claim that making vessels from rope is unique, but she does sometimes find her energy sapped by those who copy her creative work. It is important for her to be, as she says, “known and respected for making original and unique pieces that I know have come from the depth of my brain and that aren’t just a carbon copy of something I’ve seen someone else do.”)

She likes creating things that are utilitarian—things that people are going to use. Sometimes Lauren’s designs are motivated by a desire to solve a problem. For example, Lauren wanted to find a way to haul in eight grocery bags with one hand while balancing her toddler on the other hip. Her toddler, named Josephine, is now four years old.

Life for Lauren is, indeed, a juggling act for someone who creates and sells a product in addition to being a full-time mother and wife. She has come to know the value of lists. They provide her with a way to budget flexibility into her schedule. Having an online-only business eliminates the demands of running a physical shop. Lauren can allocate more of herself to making and playing. Lauren processes orders made on her website, dyes rope to be used in a new line of baskets, and finds time to play with Josephine. They make granola, go for a hike, and work in the garden. “Yes, it’s fun and empowering to run a successful business and to have people wanting to purchase what I’m creating, but I also try to remind myself daily that spending time with my husband and daughter, doing things we love, is truly important.” She loves the time they have together.

There are many challenges in running a one-woman business. But she thinks often with satisfaction and pride that she has realized her childhood dream—of making a living making distinctive, crafted creations with her own hands.

For more information, please contact Lauren Beveridge by email at info@scoutandbean.com or visit her website at www.scoutandbean.com.



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Music and Fresh Air

Pianist Mihae Lee: A Mainer at Heart

BY PHIL TEDRICK

Mihae Lee says she has always considered herself “A Mainer at Heart.” She first came to Maine from South Korea at age 15 to attend the Bowdoin Music Festival. Born in Seoul, Korea, Mihae made her professional debut at the age of 14 with the Korean National Orchestra after becoming the youngest grand prizewinner at the prestigious National Competition held by the President of Korea. As a pianist she has performed around the world. She first played at the Sebago-Long Lake Music Festival in 1995. In 2016, she took on the added role of Music Director. Now she has the unanticipated and challenging task of safely bringing live Chamber Music back to Deertrees Theater, in Harrison, Maine.



The entire 2020 season of live performances had to be canceled and replaced with virtual “Concerts from Home.” Accomplished musicians who are used to performing in front of live audiences faced the new challenge of becoming comfortable with the required technology and performing in front of video cameras in their own homes.

This year’s festival will be something of a hybrid format. There will be three live concerts performed at the Deertrees Theater, and an additional five performances presented online. The historic theater is uniquely suited to provide added safety for both audience and performers. The seating area of the building has large-screened windows with shutters along both sides. These shutters will be opened to allow optimal air flow during the concerts. Even the large doors behind the stage can be opened to further approximate an outdoor concert.

Mihae has had a long and varied musical career, part of which now is taking on the job of guiding the Music Festival in its recovery from the stifling effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The total number of performing musicians in this year’s concert series will be lower than in the past. All of the eight performances will be performed by the same six accomplished musicians. She is also Music Director of two festivals in Connecticut, where she and her husband still maintain a home, but their connection to Maine is such that they also established a home in Cape Elizabeth two years ago.

Having live musical performances again will be a big step toward normal, and the Deertrees Theater is the perfect venue for this to be undertaken.

For more informations, visit sebago musicfestival.org. •



Maine's JEWELRY ARTISANS

BY ROBERT DIAMANTE

Maine's fertile tradition in craft has deep roots, and its reputation for having some of the finest artisans is far reaching. I have been working with jewelers for more than 25 years. I can say confidently, Maine has some of the best. If I am biased, I am unabashedly so.

The jewelers I mention below are those with whom I have worked in the past or are still working. I share their names enthusiastically. I have seen the quality of their work and admired their exquisite design sense. These artisans love their art.

The most sparkling facet of all is how close they are to home. True luxury is the pleasure of knowing the hand of the maker whenever you put your jewelry on. And meeting a maker is a gift within reach. Plan a visit to view their collection. Commission a custom piece, repurpose an heirloom, or purchase a treasure already in their trove.

Jewelry is not a luxury, an extravagance, or something to pull out for dinner parties. Jewelry is meant to be lived in, as sensual and exquisite as your own body.

NISA SMILEY (nisajewelry.com)

Nisa Smiley lives an idyllic Maine lifestyle on the Blue Hill peninsula surrounded by the woods and the ocean. Her sense of place is her inspiration. In her hands, textures from the natural world, the rich colors of the seaside, and nature's patina are all deftly translated into precious metal. Nisa's jewelry embodies the deep intimacy people experience after spending time in Maine and developing a profound connection to place.

"My jewelry reflects my relationship to this environment—quiet. But there is always an eye-catching moment within the stillness. I am drawn to moments that could be missed if I were moving too quickly. I translate those moments into my jewelry."

From 20 to 80, collectors for Nisa's work defy age. Each handmade piece is like an artifact of place, emotion, and experience. Browse through her website or make an appointment to visit her studio in downtown Ellsworth.

Others of Note:

- epriordesign.com
- nataliereedfinejewelry.com
- robincuststudio.com



Nisa Smiley at her bench.
Photo by Wylde Photography

Nautilus
Slices with
Yellow Gold.
Photo by
Berlian Arts



ANITA ROELZ (circlestonedesigns.com)

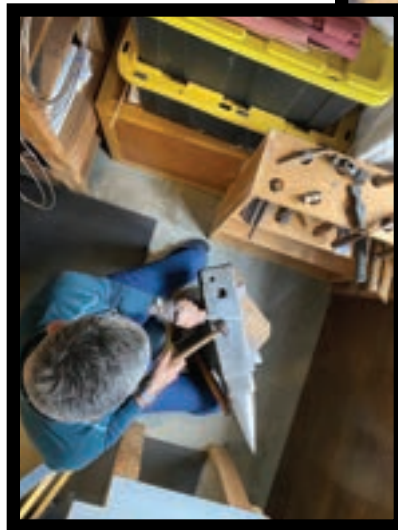
“Bracelets and rings are pieces you see on yourself every day. The pleasure is there for you always.” Energy, enthusiasm, and boldness are not enough to describe Anita Roelz, a largely self-taught jeweler from Woolwich. Her work is rugged and full of texture and color. Her silversmithing is fearless. Plus, she knows her way around a layered look.

“As we know, one piece of jewelry is never enough. I have always been a bracelet stacker. A bracelet stack is a great way to express yourself. We have multiple opportunities on the body to layer.” She adds, “a stack on your arm makes a beautiful sound.”

Peruse Anita’s website or visit her at one of the many Maine craft shows where she regularly exhibits.

Others of Note:

- christinepetersjewelry.com
- jackiehaines.com
- jnielsenjewelry.com



Photos courtesy Anita Roelz



PATTY DAUNIS (daunis.com)

An article about jewelry in Maine would lack grounding if Patty Daunis were not mentioned. At one point during our chat, I called her “the doyenne of Maine jewelry.” She laughed robustly and dared me to use it. That’s Patty. Her work embodies what we think of as fine jewelry: signature profiles, collectible groupings, gold and silver brought up to high polish, and exquisite jewels. But don’t think you know Patty from the jewelry in the cases of her downtown Portland studio. Much of her work today is a reexamination of her roots in metalsmithing.

“Over 40 years ago I began making sculptural pieces, chalices, and bowls. When I began making jewelry, I felt from day one I was making sculptural objects. If I were to do a sculpture for a business, I would go in and research the space and the personality of the business. The same goes for jewelry—it is site-specific art for the body.”

A visit to Daunis in Portland’s downtown is an experience. Plan your time—you’ll need it.

Others of Note:

- jayneredmanjewelry.com
- Lisajanegrant.com
- Nancylinkin.com



Above: Patty Daunis with a client. Right: 14k woven bracelet with family birthstones, wide woven ring with client’s stones, and narrow woven ring with our emerald and diamonds. Photos courtesy Patty Daunis



Bijoux Royale: Rubelite
Tourmaline and Pearls in
18k and 22k Yellow Gold.
Photo by Berlian Arts

STEPHANI BRIGGS (stephanibriggs.com)

The tradition of goldsmithing goes back millennia. One thinks of Tut and the riches of the Ancient Near East. To work exclusively in gold with agility and finesse takes a master. Stephani's work has always felt regal to me. Maybe it's that she discovers her stones during her trips to India. Or perhaps because her works feel like master drawings. Stephani's ability to illustrate in gold is astonishing.

"I was a painting major at the Portland School of Art [now MeCA]. But I had enrolled in a metalsmithing elective. One day a gem cutter came to class to present. I was hooked. I immediately saw the potential of color in metal."

Stephani's finishing technique—creating a soft emanating luster by working the fine gold to the surface—is signature. Open the treasure chest on her website. Every piece has a story as unique and colorful as the jewelry itself.

Others of Note:

- hclmetalworks.com
- hollyhamiltonjewelry.com
- pattybolzgoldsmith.com
- tracyjohnsonjewelry.com

You're My Forever:
18k Yellow Gold
Rings with
Multi-Colored
Tourmalines and
Full Cut
Diamonds.
Photo by
Berlian Arts



I encourage readers to explore the additional links beneath each profile. The Maine Crafts Association is also another terrific resource (mainecrafts.org).

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FRANCES PERKINS:

Champion of the American Worker

By Ruth Cashin Monsell



\$16.95, 176 pages

Available: June 2021

Published by Maine's
Islandport Press.

Available at booksellers
across the state as well as
online at islandportpress.com.

Frances Perkins, born Fannie Coraline Perkins, dedicated herself to improving the lives of America's working class. Despite her achievements, Perkins was, until recently, a lesser-known figure in US history. The PBS documentary, *Summoned: Frances Perkins and the General Welfare* (2020), helped to shed light upon her heroic story. Also in 2020, a dedicated group purchased the national historic landmark that is the Perkins Homestead in Damariscotta. From this site, the Frances Perkins Center will honor Perkins's legacy and advance educational efforts about her work. Occupied by members of the Perkins family for over 260 years, this salt-water farm is considered her life-long home.



Ruth Cashin Monsell

In the upcoming book *Frances Perkins: Champion of the American Worker*, author Ruth Monsell aims to inform middle-grade students ages 10 to 14, in Maine and throughout the country, about this influential woman. Frances Perkins had a profound impact on the lives of America's workers, through her advancement of the federal minimum wage, child labor laws, social security, and unemployment benefits.

"This is the story of the woman who probably did more to truly benefit all Americans than any other individual in our history," said Monsell. "And yet most people don't even know her name!"

Learning about women's achievements allows young girls to expand their sense of what is possible in their own lives. According to the National Women's History Alliance, a national clearinghouse providing information and training on multicultural women's history, knowledge of women's contributions both builds respect and nourishes self-esteem. But women continue to be under-represented in educational materials.

"Each time a girl opens a book and reads a womanless history, she learns she is worth less," said Myra Pollack Sadker, a pioneer in education equity within American schools, summing up the effect that gender bias can have on young students.

American children might learn about President Franklin D. Roosevelt's effort to kick-start national recovery in the era of the Great Depression. But they also need to learn about how Frances Perkins, Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor and the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet, outlined the priorities pursued in the New Deal. On March 25, 1911, Perkins had witnessed the tragic event—the fire that devastated the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and the horrific deaths of 146 workers. This sight inspired her to pursue labor reforms with great urgency. Later, she called that time, "the day the New Deal was born."

Before her appointment by Roosevelt, Perkins had dedicated her life to pursuing certain key policies that she set, including the 40-hour work week, minimum wage, unemployment compensation, and the abolition of child labor, among other relief efforts inspired by the fire. By the time of Roosevelt's death in



1945, Perkins had achieved all but one of the items on her agenda—universal healthcare access. An article in *Collier's Magazine* described these public works efforts as “not so much the Roosevelt New Deal as . . . the Perkins New Deal.” And without Perkins, the system of pensions, unemployment benefits, and disability aid that many rely upon today might not exist.

When asked about Perkins's single greatest accomplishment, Monsell answers, “Social Security. It's what she always said when asked this question.” It was Perkins who wrote the legislation known as the Social Security Act, signed into law by President Roosevelt on August 14, 1935.

But Perkins's accomplishments did not start, or end, with her time as Secretary of Labor. In *Frances Perkins*, Monsell describes events, places, and people influencing Perkins and her views—from her time spent crafting policies at home in Damariscotta to her outrage at poor factory conditions witnessed during her studies at Mount Holyoke College.

Writing *Frances Perkins: Champion of the American Worker* was an important step for its author, Ruth Monsell. As an artist and English teacher for 18 years, she has always enjoyed and pursued writing. But it was Frances Perkins's story that finally gave Monsell the needed motivation to really bear down. “I couldn't resist dedicating myself to this story—she was such a powerful feminist foremother,” says Monsell. “I felt a burning desire to bring her into the lime-light in our century.” •

CHOWDER RULES: The Story of an Epic Food Fight

By Anna Crowley Redding

\$17.95, hardcover, children's nonfiction picture book

In *Chowder Rules* author Anna Crowley Redding tells the story behind the great chowder cook-off of 1939—and the love story between Maine Representative Cleveland Sleeper and his steamy, creamy clam chowder.



When news that New Yorkers were polluting his favorite soup with tomatoes, Sleeper proposed a bill to make adding tomatoes to clam chowder a crime! But the people of Manhattan were offended. They loved the vegetable-filled version of the stew. It was a conflict that could only be solved by taste-test. This true story combines the fun of cooking with local politics and debate in a way that is digestible for children.

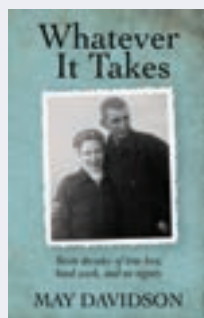
WHATEVER IT TAKES:

Seven Decades of True Love, Hard Work, and No Regrets

By May Davidson

\$16.95, softcover, adult nonfiction/memoir

In *Whatever it Takes*, May Davidson tells a love story for the ages. After falling in love as teenagers in Midcoast Maine, May and her husband Jim built their first house using 20 dollars worth of lumber. As they set about creating the life of their dreams, the couple soon learned that they could not live on optimism alone. Determined to make ends meet and to stay in Maine, they lobstered, fished, farmed sheep, and started a sawmill, among other endeavors. While trying to raise thousands of chickens the two collapsed into debt, only to fight their way out and find worldwide success with the design of the iconic Maine Buoy bell. May Davison weaves a decades-long tapestry of adventure, hard work, and ultimately true love despite the obstacles.

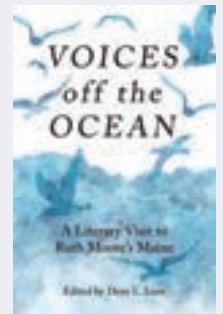


VOICES OFF THE OCEAN

Edited by Dean Lunt

\$17.95, softcover, fiction anthology

During the mid-20th century, Ruth Moore became a literary giant of regional fiction known for her dramatic and authentic portrayals of the Maine coast, its people, and way of life. Born in the tiny Maine fishing village of Gotts Island,



Moore used her upbringing inform her work and tell universal tales of human drama that reach far beyond the patch of rocky soil on which her stories were set. *Voices off the Ocean*, a new collection of her work, showcases Moore's brilliant writing and makes clear its influence on regional writing today. Selections from her works prove why Moore was compared favorably to William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, and Flannery O'Connor during her day.

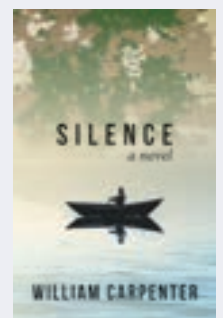
SILENCE

By William Carpenter

\$17.95, softcover, fiction

Publishing:
June 22, 2021

Author William Carpenter examines the bitter legacy of 9/11 in his new novel *Silence*. Nick Colonna, a young veteran returned home to coastal Maine from Iraq, struggles in the aftermath of an IED explosion that rendered him deaf and wiped out his entire crew. Nick finds solace in his memories of better times on nearby Amber Island—a private sanctuary owned by a wealthy Boston family, the Fletchers. Set on developing the island, the Fletchers hire Nick as a caretaker on Amber Island. As he deals with his trauma, Nick meets the youngest Fletcher daughter, Julia, who has set out to save the island. Throughout the novel Carpenter raises questions about what survives carnage and loss and where in a divided and chaotic world is there room for peace and silence.





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BUG-FREE BACKYARD LIVING

How to keep pests at bay and enjoy your outdoor spaces.

BY SARAH HOLMAN

At the beginning of last summer, many of us invested time, energy, and dollars in our yards. We viewed these external spaces as extensions of our homes, to which we were largely confined. As we celebrate the green light on maskless gatherings for the fully vaccinated, we can also look forward to planning social events the way we used to. Or, closer to the way we used to.

There are plenty of fun elements to backyard entertaining, such as the food, drinks, lighting, comfortable seating arrangements, and games. Whether you spend hours or minutes thinking about these details, nothing ruins a good time outside like bugs. Bad weather too, but we can't change the weather. Bugs, however, we can do something about.

The dangers associated with disease-carrying ticks are well known. According to the Center for Disease Control, June is the highest tick-bite month (there's another spike in the late fall), and the Northeast has the most reported tick incidents in the nation. Maine's common tick is the Blacklegged Tick, also known as a Deer Tick, and it's this miniature beast that carries and spreads Lyme disease. The CDC website has a great wealth of helpful information about identifying and removing ticks and, ideally, preventing tick bites.

If you utilize a local lawn service, they may also offer a pest management program. Mainly Grass, based in York, tackles mosquitos and ticks with custom pest solutions. Palmer Higgins, CEO of Mainly Grass, says "If left unchecked, pests can really damage an otherwise beautiful lawn, [causing] a nuisance and health risk."

Mainly Grass offers both conventional and organic lawn applications to create an unwelcoming environment for bugs, as well as general lawn services. "Our only focus is helping customers enjoy their outdoor space to the fullest," Palmer says. Other companies like TruGreen and The Turf Doctor also offer pest management along with their grass maintenance plans.

There are also plenty of DIY ways to protect your space from pests. Here are a few things to try:

Make the air move. If you have a box fan handy, plug it in. Mosquitos and other little flying pests can't stand up to a breeze.

Get rid of standing water. Keep your yard free of clutter to avoid unintentional pools of standing water. "Mosquito eggs need some form of water to hatch and develop into adults, and they can go from egg to egg-laying adult in as little as 10 days," Palmer says. Eliminating even small puddles of water around your house will help limit



population growth. “Turn over empty pots and watch out for tarps collecting water,” he suggests. Birdbaths can also be a breeding ground. If you want to keep yours open for feathered friends, make sure to change the water frequently.

Cover your food. Ants and picnics go hand-in-hand, but they don’t have to. Keep outdoor food covered as much as possible to keep pests from catching the scent.

Befriend bats. Hang a bat house on a tree near your home to purposefully invite these insect eaters into your yard. One bat can eat over 6000 bugs each night.

Keep your lawn trimmed and your yard tidy. Ticks love to hang out in tall grasses, and other bugs can take a one-way trip into your home when bushes or tree limbs touch your house. Wood piles should also be neatly stacked in a dry area to discourage rodents from nesting in them.

Nurture bug repellent plants. Consider planting these pest-repelling plants and saying so long to the bugs that hate them:

- Basil: flies, mosquitoes
- Catnip: mosquitoes, ticks, flies, cockroaches
- Chrysanthemums: roaches, ants, ticks, fleas, bedbugs
- Lavender: moths, fleas, flies, mosquitoes
- Citronella: mosquitoes
- Geranium, lemon scented: mosquitoes
- Lemon thyme: mosquitoes
- Marigold: mosquitoes
- Rosemary: mosquitoes

Create a mulch barrier: Palmer from Mainely Grass explains, “Ticks prefer taller grass and brush for ‘questing’ where they latch on to something with their back legs and wait to come into contact with a host brushing up against their outstretched front legs.” By creating a 3-ft wide (or more) barrier of wood chips or gravel between your lawn and any fields or wooded areas, you can restrict tick migration.

Discourage wild animals: Get a dog, plant natural deer repellent plants, erect a perimeter fence, and keep garbage covered. These steps will help prevent unwanted forest friends from wandering into your yard with free-riding pests on their backs.

Don’t forget that not all bugs are bad. Pollinators like bees, butterflies, and moths are critical to sustain our ecosystems, and they’re nice to look at, too. Many other, less attractive, bugs also work hard to keep your yard clean. Lacewings, several types of beetles, and even the stink bug all feast on nuisance insects or invasive plant species. The Maine.gov website has a section devoted to identifying friends and foes in the insect community and tips on how to manage backyard bugs.

Things are looking sunny this summer for entertaining, socializing, and enjoying company we haven’t seen in over a year. By managing pests, we keep health and comfort top-of-mind while fully enjoying our backyard spaces. •

A Lifetime of Garden Lessons

*If only I knew then
what I know now . . .*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LYNETTE L. WALTHER



Even though I grew up gardening and being around gardeners, the impact that gardening would eventually have on me wasn't always evident. As a small child I never suspected the gravity of that impact and the life lessons my gardens have taught me. I cut my gardening "teeth" at the side of my paternal grandmother, Reba Miley. She was one of those intuitive gardeners, not schooled nor well-read. She gardened a lot like she cooked, no recipes, only by what worked for her. And I am happy to report that she excelled at both those endeavors. Though long gone, she continues to be my source of inspiration. She simply made it look easy, natural.

And amazingly my earliest attempts at gardening were just that—easy. My first "garden" was a line of marigolds grown next to the parking lot at our apartment house. I remember that soil vividly. I no doubt had nothing more than a serving spoon secreted from the kitchen for my gardening tool. So, it was almost impossible to scratch a row in which to plant that packet of seeds. The "soil" was mostly a lot of cold, hard cinders dumped there after the boiler had finished with them.

Even so, by some alchemy those little plants shot up like mushrooms and bloomed as if they were bucking for an A+ or perhaps a blue ribbon. In the end they got the A+. I remember (me, a mini-Martha Stewart) fashioning a corsage from those plucky little flowers all fixed up with a frisky bow of leftover red curling Christmas ribbon. I proudly presented that concoction to my fourth-grade teacher for the first day of school. First lesson: To share a garden's bounty is indeed a beautiful thing.

Top: Marigolds have come a long way since I planted them for my very first garden. So have I, and I've learned a lot in the process of gardening.
Center: One of the things I have learned is that it is important to use the right tools. The right tool for the task need not be expensive. All these hand tools came from yard sales.
Bottom: Seed packages and plant tags come with lots of great advice. Read them and learn.

My second garden was three years later. We had moved to a small house, and while there was no yard to speak of for gardening, there was a large field behind it. Here, too, a bit of magic was associated with my next garden as well. But that time it was facilitated by the curmudgeon who lived next door. To get to that field and the woods beyond (for afternoon play behind the houses), my pals and I used the quickest route, which was through his yard. We beat a regular pig-path across the lawn, and I regret to admit that we often snatched stalks from his lusty patch of rhubarb on our way. As someone who prizes her patch of rhubarb, I realize now how thoughtless that was. No wonder the guy was so grumpy. One day he got so tired of our trespassing that he strung a wire about a foot off the ground across the back of his yard.

The next time we stampeded through hell-bent-for-leather, several of us—me first—went sprawling on our faces as we hit that wire. After catching our breath, we rolled around on the ground in hysterics. I can just about imagine the conversation that must have gone on inside his house as his wife no doubt chastised the old coot for nearly crippling the lot of us. The next day that wire was gone. The incident did not deter us from our route, but for certain we were a lot more respectful as we paraded through his yard after that. Word of advice here: When dealing with adolescents, be specific and leave nothing to interpretation.

But it wasn't the end of my experience with that neighbor. When spring arrived, my gardening genes kicked in with a single-mindedness that foreshadowed things to come. I decided that field would be a great spot for a vegetable garden. I set out alone, my tool this time a small shovel to break the sod for the plot. The grass was already almost knee deep, and no doubt that field had not been turned in many a year. I cannot remember how long I labored at it, several days for sure. I wasn't making much headway. One morning I set out with my little shovel only to discover—wonder of wonders—that the “mean old man” next door had used his tractor and plow to cultivate a good-sized garden for me!



TOMATO VINE GROWS TALL—In addition to tall corn, Shelby county also grows tall tomato vines, as evidenced by a hybrid plant at the home of Mrs. Reba Miley, 155 W. Jackson St. Not only has the plant grown exceptionally tall but is producing a bumper crop of fine solid tomatoes. Mrs. Miley has picked 37 to date (some weighing three-quarters of a pound) and there were 15 ready to be picked.

My Grandmother Reba Miley will forever be my gardening inspiration. She got me started on this path and I have rarely strayed.

Second lesson learned: Help a young person garden, and they'll remember it—forever.

Oh, the things I grew in that garden! It would be difficult to duplicate the sense of satisfaction and pure pleasure that the vegetable patch produced. There were brown paper grocery sacks of green beans, cucumbers, and even lettuce. It must have rained just enough that summer, and the insects must have been ignorant of the garden's presence. Its success required very little intervention on my part, other than planting those seeds. What a way to start off a career as a gardener. I mean how easy could it be? You just put the seeds in the ground, and things grow. What's complicated about that?

Had my early attempts at gardening been complete disasters, I wonder if I would be gardening today. Call it beginner's luck or serendipity—those early successes gave me enough confidence to continue. Even so, in the grand scheme

of things I was truly clueless. As I was by that proverbial wire across my path, I have been jerked up short a time or two, by various gardens, in the many years since then. Weather and insects haven't always cooperated, and some anticipated results never materialized. Like anyone who has been gardening for half a century, I have encountered plenty of roadblocks and setbacks, along with plenty of bountiful harvests. I have learned a bit and continue to discover as I garden on. If I were to give gardening advice to my much younger self, it would go something like this:

Respect the soil. Study your soil, learn its characteristics, and find out how you can improve it. Every bit as important as the plants, the soil needs to be the best it possibly can be, often by amending heavy clay soils or loose sandy ones with compost. Healthy, rich soil means you won't need to use harmful chemicals to raise robust plants. Your plants truly are only as good as your soil.



Peonies are hardy herbaceous perennials, but the blooms don't last long. Take the time to stop and enjoy them and all those ephemeral moments in the garden.

The right tool can make any job easier. Kitchen cutlery isn't meant for gardening. Invest in the right tools for the job. It doesn't have to take a fortune to get the right tools. Try yard sales or thrift shops.

Plants that grow the fastest aren't always the best. Yes, Jack's beanstalks are fantastic, but they can take over and prevent anything else from taking hold. Monocultures are always boring and not the most environmentally sustainable choices. Unless you are growing a food crop, slower plants allow you to plan and create attractive ornamental gardens.

Know and respect your growing zone, but challenge it, too. Every plant is native to some place. Plants developed all over the world and grow in their natural states, with no human intervention, in specific ranges of temperature, shade or sun exposure, and moisture amounts. Take plants out of their preferred environment and you had better be prepared to make some concessions, accommodations, or enhancements. Growing zones tell us the extremes of temperatures to expect in any given area, which lets us know if a particular plant will thrive in a partic-

ular area. Ignoring your growing zone can result in heartache, wasted effort, and lost money spent for plants or seeds. That said, there are micro-climates within any given zone that just might support that particular plant you wish you could grow. Within reason (—you cannot grow coconut palms in Maine, at least not outside—), pushing your zone can sometimes work out, and with traffic-stopping results.

Read those seed packages and plant tags. Not only do seed envelopes and little tags that come with plants tell you the name of the plant you just purchased, they give you a lot of helpful information in a condensed space. They say, for example, how deep and far apart the seeds should be planted, how long the plants will take to mature, and what conditions (of sun, shade, water, soil, humidity, and so on) are needed for success. They often also list growing zone preferences for the plant.

Ask questions and listen closely to the answers. Sometimes we have to be knowledgeable in order to ask questions, and sometimes we just need to admit we don't know all the answers. It is OK to ask someone who knows more than we do. The key to this advice is

Stop and smell
the sweet peas,
and revel in your
special time with your
outdoor environment.
Gardens are truly gifts.

to listen. I mean really listen. Then ask some more questions. Eventually we will understand, and with luck we may someday be able to give advice, too.

It's okay if some plants do die. This lesson is one of the most difficult ones to learn. Yet when plants die, we do learn something. Perhaps it was because it wasn't watered enough, was watered too much, was planted in the wrong place, or was an annual, and thus destined to die at the end of the growing season. It is okay to plant annuals that can brighten up gardens, even if they will die at the end of the season.

Go easy on your back. It has to last a long, long time. Bend your knees, not your back to reach or pick up things. If you have to move something heavy, don't try to carry it by yourself. If you do try anyway, carry it as close to your body as possible. The human back is poorly designed for all we want to accomplish, but respect it or it will disrespect you, debilitating you with stubborn, chronic pain.

Wear sunscreen and a hat. Doing so will help lower your risk of skin cancer.

Enjoy the process. Sure, results are wonderful, rewarding, and bring a feeling of pride. But the process can yield all those dividends as well. Take your time. Stop and smell the sweet peas, and revel in your special time with your outdoor environment. Gardens are truly gifts, to be savored and appreciated from their inception to their fruition. In short, have fun. I know I still am. •

Ironman Triathlete Dava Davin of Portside Real Estate Group

"It's Never Too Late to Live Your Best Life."

By Robert Cook

Dava Davin has never been afraid to take risks if she believes that is what it takes to be successful on a personal and professional level. Intuition is the GPS of the soul, and when Dava went soul-searching for a new direction in 2012, she found it.

Nine years later, as the founder of Portside Real Estate Group in Falmouth, a 100-percent women owned company, Dava has built the fifth largest real estate agency in Maine. The business is doing very well, thanks to the real estate boom driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. She employs 105 agents in five Portside offices that stretch from Kennebunk to Yarmouth.

Through it all, Dava has maintained a commitment to give back to her fellow Mainers. She has created a company culture that is dedicated to helping others.

"We pride ourselves on our service and the care that we give to the clients, and collectively we feel a larger responsibility to give back to our community and enhance our community as well," Dava said.

To that end, Dava launched the "1% for Maine" Foundation. The agents of Portside donate 1 percent of their gross sales commissions to help Mainers who are struggling with the opioid crisis, generational poverty, housing problems, and hunger issues. "We hope to donate \$250,000 to Mainers this year," she explained.

A seven-member agent committee reviews the requests they receive to decide who receives grants on a quarterly basis to a specific category. In April, Dava said her agency awarded two \$10,000 grants.

"What this program proves is that we can make a difference in Mainers' lives," Dava said. "If companies like mine that are much bigger also donated 1 percent, we can make a difference."

Portside Real Estate Group also sponsors an events series that drew as many as 350 people pre-pandemic. The events series shifted to a virtual affair in 2020 and was still able to raise \$24,000. This amount, coupled with the \$22,000 provided by the company and \$35,000 from the agents, allowed Dava's company to donate \$81,000 to Maine non-profits.

While 2020 was a difficult year for many sectors of the Maine economy, the real estate market has remained red hot. Demand for new homes and existing homes on the market soared as more people from other parts



of the country decided to move to Maine and escape the stress of the pandemic.

"Pre-pandemic, we had been trending that way," Dava observed. The state already saw rising prices and low inventory. "The pandemic just escalated that."

"Maine is now on the map. We'll never go back," Dava predicted. Before COVID-19 arrived in Maine in March 2020, Dava said it would take less than a month for a listing to be sold. Now it will be sold in less than a week. The other trend that her agents and other realtors are seeing is that homes are selling for over 100 percent of the sales price/list price ratio.

In Portside Real Estate Group's annual report, the agency saw sales revenues of \$635 million from 605 listings sold. Some 220 of the 855 buyers were from out of state.

In some ways, Dava's success as a real estate entrepreneur is related to her belief that it is never too late for anyone to switch gears and try something new.

Dava founded her company in October 2012 with six other people in Falmouth, on the heels of the 2008 financial meltdown and the recession that followed.

"Real estate was a second career for me, and I had been working for a larger franchise," Dava explained.

She had also been selling pharmaceutical supplies and had reached a point in her life where she needed to move in a new direction. She loved real estate and wanted to form an agency that reflected her values. When she

and her husband, Jim, moved to Maine in 2008, she obtained her real estate license.

Unlike larger real estate agencies that have offices and experiences that are similar nationwide, Dava wanted to create a more local, Maine-centric agency. "I just wanted something that felt a little more authentic and where I would have the creative freedom to build it the way I wanted to here in Maine."

Her approach worked, and within a few years, Portside Real Estate Group went from having the main office in Falmouth to subsequent locations in Portland, Yarmouth, Cape Elizabeth, and Kennebunk.

Like many Mainers, Dava's journey began elsewhere. She was born in Bichester, England, near Oxford. Her parents worked for the United States government, and their postings took her family to Spain and Germany. They then returned to the US and settled in Connecticut.

Dava attended the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and studied plant and soil science, with a minor in business. "I was envisioning opening a nursery and a greenhouse," she recalled.

Her husband Jim has worked for Tyler Technologies in Falmouth for 26 years, and his job is what made them decide to move to Maine. They have two boys, Cole, 16 and Ty, 17.

Like many business leaders, Dava has to make sure she makes equal time for her business and her family with a proper work/home balance. In her mid-30s, Dava decided to get more athletic and took up running and strength training. When she wasn't growing her business and raising her family, Dava was competing in four Iron Man Triathlon events and running in marathons. The discipline it takes to train and compete in those events also helps her strike the right work/family balance, she believes.

"I'm a great believer in living your best life," Dava said.

Dava competed in two Iron Man Triathlon events in Lake Placid, NY and two in Canada pre-pandemic. Those events typically involve a 112-mile bike ride, a 2.4-mile swim, and a full marathon. In 2019, Dava ran in the New York City marathon, and her goal is to run in the other five majors held in Boston, Chicago, Berlin, London, and Tokyo.

"I'm a late bloomer," Dava notes. "But it's never too late." •

Overcoming Fear of Investing

By Katie Brann, CFP®

“Growth and comfort do not coexist.”

—Ginny Rometty, CEO of IBM

If you followed the stock market in 2020, you know that it was a rollercoaster ride. The market’s initial reaction to COVID-19 was swift and dramatic: the S&P 500 dropped 34 percent from February 19 to March 23. I spent March and April counseling clients through this challenge. Then the market recovered and ultimately had an above-average year, with a total return of over 18 percent for 2020.* By December, few clients were calling to discuss market performance.

The fear of loss in investing is much more powerful than the joy of positive returns. Fear causes millions of investors to sell when the market bottoms, and it keeps others from investing in the first place. Women in particular don’t invest in stocks as much as men, and it’s not totally clear why. But I’m certain that sometimes, risk and fear of loss is the reason. Multiple studies show that women actually tend to be better investors than men, and they should be empowered to take on the stock market.**

Whether you’re a brand-new investor or have been at it for years, keep these four things in mind when fear starts to creep in.

- **Don’t try to get the timing perfect.** I’m often asked if “now is a good time to invest.” The short answer: I don’t know. The market is rarely predictable in the short-term, and I can’t tell you if stocks will be worth more tomorrow than today. What I do know is, long-term investors are typically reward-



Katie Brann

ed. Giving your investments time to grow is more important than investing at the “right” time.

- **Understand that inflation is a risk, too.** If you’ve been stashing cash in the bank to spend on travel when you retire, it might not get you very far. With few exceptions, the prices of things you buy today will be higher in the future, and most bank accounts don’t pay enough interest to keep up with inflation. Stocks tend to grow faster than the rate of inflation.

- **Risk isn’t an all or nothing decision.** You don’t have to put all your money in the stock market, especially if you expect to sell some or all your investments within five to ten years. Bonds have historically offered

higher rates of return than cash or money market funds, but lower returns and less risk than stocks. Investing some of your assets in bonds can bring down your overall risk level. A financial advisor can help you decide on an appropriate mix of stocks, bonds, and cash.

- **Put volatility in perspective.** Your home is a long-term investment, just like your stocks. However, you don’t have an app that gives you an accurate valuation of your home every minute of every day. Further, you probably don’t worry much about your home value until you’re getting ready to sell. The ability to check your portfolio value whenever you want is wonderful, but if you aren’t selling those investments anytime soon, you shouldn’t panic every time the value drops.

*Total return includes capital appreciation, interest, and dividends.

**A 2017 Fidelity study found that women outperform men in investing by 0.4 percent. A 2016 Wells Fargo study found that women achieved higher returns on their investments while taking less risk (as measured by variability).



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OPEN-FACED BLUEBERRY PIE



Photos courtesy Jim Bailey

BY JIM BAILEY, THE YANKEE CHEF

I am jumping the gun by a month with this delicious pie, but I wanted you to hold on to this recipe when Maine blueberries come into their own this year. You will be thankful, trust me! This is the one pie that reminds me of my Dad, the second Yankee Chef. He made this delicious dessert at all the restaurants he ran or worked at, beginning in 1961 at the old Bangor Exchange in Pickering Square, Bangor. When I was 14 years old, I remember it being my favorite pie at my father's restaurant, Treadwell's in Hermon, Maine, back in the mid-'70s. Apparently it was everyone else's favorite as well because, next to his Open-Faced Strawberry Pie, this one was the biggest seller.

Over the years, many have asked if frozen blueberries can be substituted, and the simple answer is yes! No change in directions at all; just keep the blueberries frozen as you are preparing this Maine summertime treat.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups fresh* blueberries, divided
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 4 heaping tablespoons cornstarch
- 3/4 teaspoon allspice
- 9-inch prepared graham cracker pie crust

**Note: As mentioned, frozen berries can be substituted, such as Wyman's Fresh-Frozen Wild Blueberries.*

DIRECTIONS

- Place 1 cup blueberries, water, and lime juice in a saucepan and bring to a boil over medium high heat. While waiting, blend sugar, cornstarch, and allspice in a bowl; set aside. Once the blueberry mixture is boiling, begin mashing with a potato masher as fine as you are able to. Many will use an immersion blender to accomplish this.
- Add the sugar mixture and whisk well while it is coming back up to boiling. Stir and boil for 30 seconds, until thickened. Remove from heat and stir in remaining blueberries until all berries are evenly coated with liquid.
- Pour into crust. It will mound slightly but will not overflow because of the thickness. Immediately cover with film wrap, slightly pressing down to touch as much of the blueberry pie as possible, eliminating air pockets. Refrigerate at least 4 hours until chilled and set.



SEA GLASS

BY SHELAGH TALBOT

When my daughter was a little girl growing up on the coast of Maine, one of her favorite occupations in June was to walk the beaches with me and hunt for sea glass. She would make a ceremony of it, making sure it was a weekend day and the sun was shining. She'd arrive at my bedside early in the morning with a conspiratorial grin on her face, saying, "Today's the perfect day, Mom. Let's go find some sea glass."

So, after breakfast, off we'd go, carrying plastic pails and feeling hopeful to find the precious treasures waiting for us. The beach we traveled to all those years was broad and long, especially at low tide, and we'd wander along the water's edge searching the surf and wet sand. My daughter had such sharp eyes—she could spot a blue piece of sea glass from far away. She loved blue, and it was such fun for us, this special time. The hunt for these gifts from the sea was all her idea, too, starting when she was about four years old. I confess that in those early days I would hide sea glass for her to find along the walk, but after a few years she was much better than I as a sea glass sleuth.

We'd wander for hours, first along the shoreline and then further and further inland toward the dunes. We would crow and laugh when we discovered something, even if it wasn't what we were seeking. We'd find crab legs, interesting driftwood, and shells dropped by hungry gulls. If we found trash amongst the treasures, which we'd stow in a bag I'd brought along. We'd watch the local eagle family swoop and dive over the bay, and we could hear the piping calls of their nestlings crying to be fed.

We'd watch the lobster boats out on the water, chug-

ging from buoy to buoy and hauling up crates we hoped were full of those clawed crustaceans. We'd make bets where the lobsters would go. "Those will go to Boston," my daughter stated as she watched a crate being hauled up. "Why do you think that?" I asked. She grinned mysteriously, "Because!" she laughed and skipped off to find more sea glass. "Well, the next one's going to Portland," I shouted after her. It was such an immersive experience—hearing all the sounds, smelling the salty sea air, and feeling it cool the skin while spying around for treasure.

My daughter's favorites were the scuffed-up blue pieces. "They've had such a hard life out in the ocean," she would say, crinkling her forehead in concern. "Now they can come home with us and just be loved!" Over the years we have accumulated a lot of much-appreciated pieces in all sizes and colors. She would eschew the newer pieces we might find. "They're too shiny, Mom," she'd say. "They needed to be tumbled up some more. That will make them softer-looking and prettier."

I think that was a wise observation on her part, and I believe it can apply to us humans as well. Perhaps that's why grandparents are much beloved. They've been scuffed up over the years in the sea of life. Their essence has taken on a softness that only many years of living on this planet could create.

Now that my daughter is grown, we do not go sea glass hunting as much as we used to, but every June I'm reminded of those lessons of long ago by the jar filled with sea glass perched on a special shelf. I notice that I'm becoming a scuffed-up luminous piece of sea glass, too, just like those in the jar—and I don't mind it a bit. •

QUESTIONABLE ADVICE

BY L.C. VAN SAVAGE

I want to make my friend my daughter's godmother. She said she was happy, but she said she didn't think she was the right fit. Accepting the godmother role doesn't seem like that big a deal to me. Is it okay to try to persuade her?

—Corinne

NO! Here's the scoop. For some, the godparent thing is no big deal and has little meaning other than it being a weird kind of "honor." For others, it's a huge deal. For the latter, they perhaps subscribe to the original definition of that position, that should the parents go toes-up, the godparent becomes the one responsible for the religious upbringing of the newly orphaned. That may be what is going on with your friend. She may have strong feelings about that "religious upbringing" gig, and so she's right to think it's a bad fit for her. (It may also be that she just doesn't like kids or maybe even your daughter in particular. Yes. It happens.) Either discuss it frankly with your pal or move on to someone who is a little more into it. Personally, in all my life I've never known a selected godparent to be called upon to do anything for the godchild, except for lots of godkids it's just another "relative" to cadge \$\$ from in a few years.

Guess who just found out she's gluten intolerant. Do you have any advice on making such a big dietary change? I'm dreading it.

—Olivia

Oh, not to worry! As with all new food concerns, when the gluten factor first gained in national awareness, the food was terrible, just as vegetarian meals initially used to tend toward the monotonous. But gluten free edibles these days are rather good—no, really! That food has come a long way, baby, and in the main, tastes pretty good. People who remove gluten from their daily nosh report that they feel great, so much better, even if maybe beforehand they weren't that aware that they felt that bad. So, keep an open mind, sample a lot of options, and find what works for you.

My friend's husband made me very uncomfortable during a dinner party. He was flirting and making suggestive remarks. I recently heard he's done the same with other women in our circle. I can't decide whether I should tell my friend about his unwanted type of talk.

—A.W.

If you confront the creep, he'll give you the eyebrows-up, innocent, incredulous stare and say, "Who me? I'm a kidder. You know I'm a kidder! What's wrong with you?" So, do you and your friends want it to stop? Then rat the slimeball out. Blow the whistle on him. Squeal on him. Be the snitch. Employ every cliché in the book, but tell on him. If you and your friends are tolerating his offensive, inappropriate, off-putting way of speaking, you're enabling this. Will you lose your friend's friendship? Just for a while. She will at first be angry, deny it, or blow it all off as if it is just that capricious "funny, charming, adorable, bad-boy way of his." But in time, she'll have to own up and admit you were right. Honey, he's doing this with all of you because he can. You're letting him. Be the stoolie and squash that inflated ego he's proudly carrying around. Do it!

My boss made a sexist comment the other day, disparaging men. Even though our team is all women, it still made me uncomfortable. I don't know how to confront her about this.

—Katie

Next time you're alone with this person (I'm assuming it's a woman), chuckle good-naturedly and say you'd given a lot of thought regarding her comment about men. Tell her that you've found jerks abound in both sexes, but that you personally kind of enjoy men, don't want to think they're all bad people, as you don't want to think about women being all bad people.

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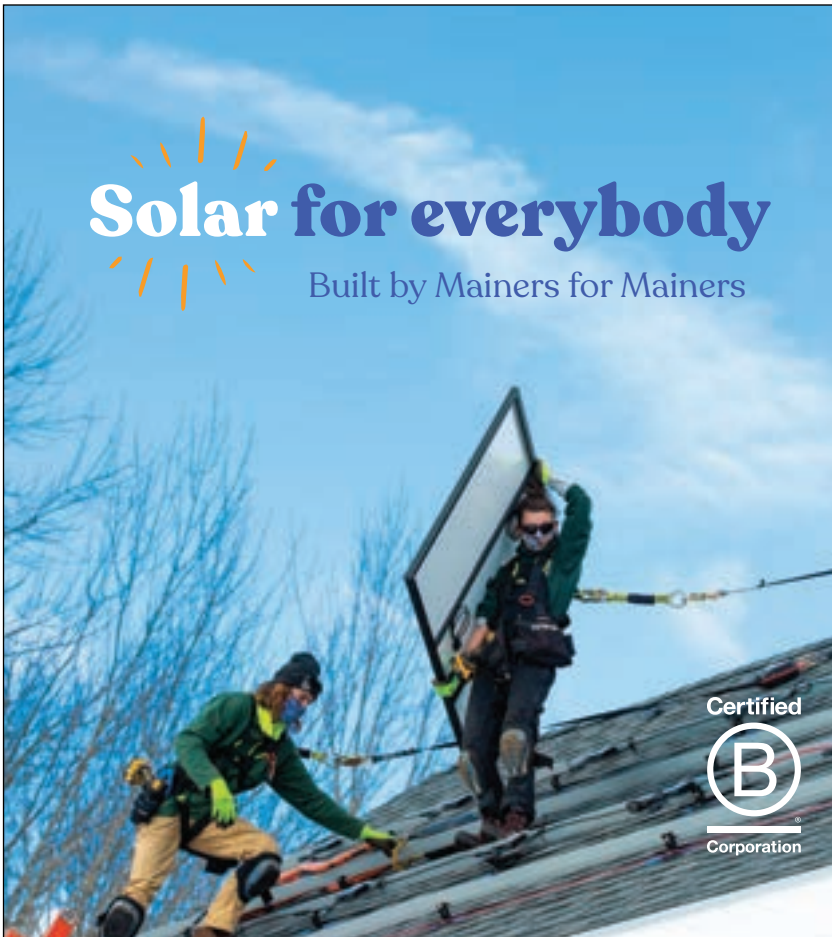
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